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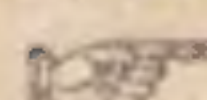
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THE

FALCON ROVER.

BY JAMES HUNGERFORD

NEW YORK:
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THE

FALCON ROVER

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BY JAMES HUNGERFORD

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NO. 23 WILLIAM STREET.

THE FALCON ROVER.

CHAPTER I.

THE DISCOVERY.

"A mystery! By heaven, I'll find it out,

If a man may."—THE MAIDEN.

"Speed, Malise, speed!"—LADY OF THE LAKE.

ONE of the most lovely pictures in lowland scenery which I have ever looked upon, is that around the mouth of a river which I have called the Clearwater (the English translation of its Indian name), and which flows between two of the southern counties of the western shore of Maryland.

From the northern shore of that stream, in this place wide and beautiful, stretches out a long, flat strip of white sand, which is covered here and there with patches of crab-grass and of that kind of cactus commonly called the "prickly pear." On the western side of this strip of sand is a deep and capacious harbor, much resorted to by bay-craft and sea-going vessels, while awaiting a fair wind up or down the bay. On its eastern side extends a gulf or indentation of the coast, called by sailors, if I remember rightly, Patuxent Roads, and which expands toward and mingles with the broad and beautiful Chesapeake. Along the shores of this gulf are shoals, famous in the country around as resorts of the fish called "drums," which circumstance has given the name of Drum Point to the beach extending as described, between the Clearwater and Maryland's noble bay.

On the northern side of Drum Point harbor, and near to where the point begins to curve away from the mainland, stood, during the second decade of this century, (and, indeed, for many years afterward) a long, single-story frame building. This building, though placed upon the sands, was still many yards away from the highest line reached by the water at high tide. Directly behind it the land arose with a rapid swell, to a plateau some thirty or forty feet above the shore of

the harbor. This frame structure was what is called in the United States a "store," and contained for sale such articles as are most in demand among seamen. It belonged to an individual whom I will call by a fictitious name, Ashleigh, (for some of his family, for whom I have a kindly feeling, are still living), and who owned an estate of several hundreds of acres, embracing all the eastern line of the harbor shore, and extending some distance into the country back of it.

At the time of which I write, mysterious and very injurious stories about the owner of this store circulated in the neighboring country on both sides of the Clearwater. It was said that he concealed smuggled goods, and even goods captured by pirates on the high seas, until an opportunity should occur for secretly conveying them for sale to Baltimore—that he was implicated in some way in the trials for piracy held before one of the United States courts in Baltimore in the early part of the present century.

At about half-past twelve o'clock on a night toward the end of May in the year 1817, three human figures stood upon the hill-side overlooking Drum Point harbor. The principal form of the group was that of John Alvan Coe, a handsome young man of between twenty-one and twenty-two years of age, tall and slender, yet of stately bearing. When seen in the day light his clear blue eyes, Roman nose and light chesnut hair indicated a sanguine but gentle character, and one endowed with dauntless courage controlled by a reflective mind. This young gentleman, the son of a planter in the neighborhood, once wealthy, but now much reduced in worldly circumstances, was returning from his sport of night-fishing for drums, accompanied by two sturdy negro men, who bore between them, suspended upon a pole, the ends of which rested upon their shoulders, a large basket heavily laden with the scaly trophies of their recent employment.

Young Coe, while passing on his way to the fishing about sunset, along the hill-side on which he now stood, had noticed among the two or three vessels in Drum Point harbor, a beautiful brig of about a hundred and twenty tons burden. She was remarkable among the other vessels for her graceful figure and the neat and trim appearance of every thing on board of her. On his return from the fishing, after leaving

his boat hauled up on the beach of a small cove on the east side of Drum Point, his path lay across the low and sandy neck of land connecting the point with the mainland, and then in a gradual ascent along the green hill-side overlooking the harbor. While pursuing this path he had halted, with his companions, in a position from which he could view to the best advantage the fair and romantic scene which lay before him.

The moon, which was at its full, shed a softly brilliant silvery light over land and water. Away toward the west spread the beautiful lake-like expanse of the river—above five miles in length by two miles in width—which is bounded northward and southward respectively by the counties before referred to, eastward by Drum Point and westward by the long, slender and curving and still more lovely Point Patience. The waters of this fair expanse, softly stirred by a light breeze, gleamed and darkened with myriad and ceaselessly increasing lights and shadows under the moonlight spell. The front of the low bluffs on the St. Mary's side of the river, and the broad beach of sand beneath them, glowed softly white in the beautiful light.

It was impossible that one, endowed, as was John Alvan Coe, with a temperament unusually æsthetic, could avoid—although constantly accustomed to scenes of natural beauty—allowing his gaze to rest for a moment upon the charming view before him. His attention was soon arrested, however, by something which was occurring in the harbor under the hill on which he stood. The only vessel remaining there was the beautiful brig which he had noticed at sunset. Three boats, apparently heavily laden, had left the brig and were coming toward the shore. Soon afterward the young man saw a light shining out from one of the back windows of the storehouse on the beach.

There were some peculiarities in the character—or rather mental constitution—of young Coe, with which it is necessary that I should acquaint the reader, before we proceed further in the narrative of the remarkable series of occurrences which arose to him out of the incidents of this night. He not only loved danger for its own sake, but was endowed with great fondness for romantic and unusual adventures. He had

also a characteristic which, had it not been controlled to a great extent by right principles, would have subjected him to just censure. This was a great and at times irresistible curiosity to investigate whatever presented the appearance of darkness and mystery. In childhood this peculiarity had mainly exhibited itself in a fondness for unraveling riddles and conundrums; in more advanced youth, by solving, with great patience and industry, the most difficult problems in mathematics. The penetration of the meaning of the movement of the boats from the brig at such an hour—irresistibly calling to mind, as it did, the mysterious reports of smugglers and pirates in connection with this place—presented an especial fascination to the young manhood of a mind constituted as was his. His resolution was immediately formed to discover, at all hazards, the meaning of what was taking place beneath him.

It should have been mentioned before, perhaps, that the hill-side above the harbor was covered, to a great extent, with a growth of bushes, with a tree here and there. It was under one of the latter, whose dense shadow shielded them from the view of those in the boats, that the fishing-party stood, while young Coe was making the observations recorded above. As soon as he formed the resolution already mentioned, the young man addressed the two negro men.

"Boys," he said, "take up the basket"—they had put it down to rest themselves—"and go on. I shall follow you very soon. But do not wait for me, even though I should not overtake you before you get home."

The two negroes resumed their load and again started on their path. The young man waited until they had passed out of sight over the hill, and until the boats had landed and the men belonging to them had, after a number of trips between the boats and the storehouse, transferred all the lading to the latter and themselves remained under its roof. He then cautiously descended the hill, concealing himself as much as possible by interposing, whenever he could do so, the bushes between himself and the shore. In a few minutes he arrived beneath the window of the store-room from which the light, that he had before observed, was still shining.

Guardedly, he looked in. The counter had been entirely

removed from its place, revealing a long and narrow opening in the floor, and steps leading downward. Silks, and other costly dry goods, and a number of boxes and other closed packages, were piled on the counter and floor. A lamp, casting a bright light, stood upon the counter, and another light shone from an opening in the floor; and men were seen carrying the merchandise into the cellar to which the steps below the floor led, and returning at short intervals for more. Two or three other men were standing on the floor of the store-room; one or the other of whom seemed, from time to time, to be giving directions to those who were removing the piles of goods to the apartment below.

There was a tall and graceful man on the side of the room opposite to the window at which young Coe was standing, who leaned against the closed door which looked, when opened, upon the river. This man wore a dark dress and a black hat with a broad, slouched brim, which threw a dense shadow over the upper part of his countenance. The long, black beard from his unshaven face reached, in gracefully-waving flow, half way from his chin to his waist. This man did not speak, except to make a remark, now and then, to the two or three men who were not engaged in removing the goods.

Among all the men whom young Coe saw there was not one whom he recognized as having been seen by him before. If Mr. Ashleigh himself was engaged in what was taking place, he must have been in the cellar.

John Alvan Coe had barely time to make the observations recorded above, when the tall and quiet individual, who was leaning against the closed door, beckoned to a man near him to whom he made some remarks in a low tone. This man immediately spoke to the others who were standing about on the floor of the store-room. Instantly all in the room who were not engaged in removing the goods—except the long-bearded man who wore the slouched hat, and who, with a motion not at all hurried, opened for them the door against which he had been leaning—sallied forth upon the sands.

The young man waited for no further developments. Supposing very naturally—what was the case—that he had been discovered, and that this party were sent in pursuit of him, he immediately turned away from the window and plunged

into the pathway leading up the hill towards Mr. Ashleigh's residence. No action, under the circumstances, could have shewn the quick perception and ready decision of his mind to more advantage than his at once taking to this pathway; for, after he was once seen by his pursuers, his concealing himself amongst the few trees and scattered clumps of bushes along the hill-side would have been no safeguard under the almost daylight brightness of the clear moonlight. Such a course would have given to his pursuers only a limited space of ground to search over at their leisure, with the absolute certainty of discovering his place of concealment and making him prisoner. His taking the plain pathway to the hill-top made his escape depend upon his fleetness of foot for but a short distance; for, the hill once surmounted, a dense forest spread for miles along the route which he had to pursue. He had no uneasiness or doubt in trusting to his speed; for, inured by daily exercise, he had long been considered to be the boldest leaper and fleetest runner in all the country side.

CHAPTER II.

THE PURSUIT.

Hahn—My lord, he has escaped.

Otto—Have thou no fear; he shall be prisoner.

I know the bird; his ways, where he frequents
And I shall line a twig, upon the which
I'll easily entice him to alight."—OLDENHEIM.

THE noise of the footsteps passing out of the door brought from the cellar a tall and slender elderly man, with black eyes and dark hair thickly interspersed with gray. This individual seemed to be in a state of much excitement.

"What is the matter, Captain Vance?" he asked. "What has happened?"

"Nothing of much importance," answered the tall and graceful man with the dark dress and black slouched hat, who was again leaning—as when first seen by John Alvan

Coc—against the door which opened upon the sands. “I caught sight of a man looking in upon us just now through the back window.”

“Do you consider that fact as of not much importance?” said the elderly man from the cellar. “If you were in my position, I think that you would entertain a different opinion.”

“Oh!” exclaimed the captain, in a careless manner, “he was only

‘A chiel amang us takin’ notes.’”

I am very sure that he will never ‘prent ‘em.’ I shall take especial pains that he shall never have a chance of doing so.”

“The men who went out just now, then,” remarked the elderly man, in an interrogative manner, “were sent to catch him?”

“Yes,” was the laconic reply.

“God grant that they may catch him!” exclaimed the gray-headed man, in an earnest tone.

“If I were you, I would not call upon God in such a case,” said Captain Vance, whose coolness and self-possession afforded a complete contrast to the excitement and alarm conspicuous in the bearing of his elder companion. “You had better turn your face downward than upward when you call for help; for—to speak according to your quasi-puritanical notions—you are more likely to have sympathy, in the present business, from the powers below than from the powers above. If prayer is the longing of the heart rather than the speech of the lips—as I heard the man who was looking in at the window say a year or so ago—you would have more chance for help by praying to the devil, Mr. Ashleigh; that is, if his infernal majesty should think that any more assistance to you is needed to buy you.”

“It is evident, captain,” retorted Mr. Ashleigh, “that you are now in one of your philosophical moods—as Billy Bow-sprit calls them. I can not see, however, that, even in the view of our relative positions which you are now taking, you have any advantage of me. I have long been familiar with the saying that ‘the receiver is as bad as the thief;’ but I have never heard—if my memory serves me rightly—that the receiver is worse than the thief.”

“Nevertheless, I have the advantage of you,” quietly re-

answered Captain Vance. "I do not pretend to be any better than I am; I do not 'wear the livery of heaven to serve the devil in.'"

"Not in 'your vocation, Hal,'" said Mr. Ashleigh; "that is, not here or on shipboard; but at home you are, I am sure, just as much a hypocrite as I am."

"There is some pith in that retort," replied Captain Vance, in a somewhat yielding tone. "Ah! we are all more or less hypocrites, Mr. Ashleigh; as the poet says, 'we are all shadows to each other.'"

"Besides," continued Mr. Ashleigh, "nobody in this neighborhood would recognize you in that disguise, and by this light; whereas, this building is known to belong to me, and the discovery of the business which is carried on here would, therefore, ruin me."

"Pardon the lightness of my manner of speaking," said the young man, in an earnest tone of voice. "My real reason for speaking so was not on account of want of concern in your interests, but because there is, in fact, no danger to you, or to any one of us, in any discovery made by the individual who just now peeped in upon us."

"I think that you intimated, a few moments ago," remarked Ashleigh, "that you know the person who was reconnoitering us. Who is he?"

"John Alvan Coe," was the answer; "son of old Mr. Coe, who owns a plantation at the head of St. John's Creek, a few miles from this place."

"Then I am lost," exclaimed Ashleigh, in increased alarm. "No man in this county—I may say in this State—can surpass him in ferreting out a secret, when once he has obtained a hint of it."

"I am as familiar with that peculiarity in his character as you are," remarked Captain Vance. "But I have a plan partly formed in my head, which, I am almost sure, will not only render him harmless, but will also add a very brave and intelligent member to my ship's company. I have but little hope that those who have gone in pursuit of him will overtake him. He is the fleetest runner that I ever knew; and sailors make but poor comparative headway on land."

"What is your plan?" asked Ashleigh.

"It is not yet perfectly formed," answered Vance. "It is still in the crucible of the brain; and I can not tell what shape it will take until it has come out complete."

"You had better be in a hurry, then," said the elder speaker. "There is but little time to act; when he has once told what he has witnessed here to another, the information will spread and spread, and there will be no stopping it. And then the consequences—ah! 'that way madness lies.'"

"Feel no uneasiness," said Captain Vance, in a tone of perfect confidence. "He shall take his breakfast on board of the *Falcon* to-morrow morning."

"It is some relief to me to hear you speak so confidently," remarked Ashleigh. "Still I can not help fearing that trouble will grow out of this thing. I wish that my advice in one respect had been followed, and that we had waited for a few days, until the moon shall set before daylight, so that we might have had an hour or two of absolute darkness for our work."

"I have before represented to you," replied Captain Vance, "that we should have run still greater risk by such a course, perhaps have had the revenue-officer down upon me, while I had all these men on board, and such a quantity of goods for which I have no bill of lading. What suspicions would have been aroused by my lingering around here for a week at least, with no excuse on account of stress of weather for the delay!"

"Well," observed Ashleigh, with an uneasy sigh, "there is some force in what you say; and it is too late now to discuss the matter."

"Oh!" said Vance, in a light and cheerful manner, "there is no need of sighing, I assure you. This affair of young Cooe does not disturb me at all. It only determines me to do at once what I have often thought of undertaking. I have no doubt, as I said before, that it will only result in adding a new and unusually valuable member to our force. He is remarkably intelligent, and as brave as a lion."

"I hope that your impressions may prove correct," remarked Ashleigh, in a manner that still expressed uneasiness.

At this moment the door was opened from the outside, giving entrance to a male individual of a somewhat comical

appearance. He was rather under five feet in height, and was what is called "square built"—that is, his form and limbs were very stout, or rather, perhaps, thick; and his waist was nearly as wide as his shoulders or his hips. His hair was of a reddish-brown or tawny color, of exuberant growth, and worn in long, clustering curls which swept his shoulders. His face was deeply tanned by sun and weather; and the scar of a saber-cut above his left eye caused the eyebrow on that side to be below the line of its fellow. The eyes were of a reddish hazel color, and their expression showed that their possessor had an appreciation of the humorous, but that there was also "a lurking devil" in his composition. He was dressed in the ordinary sailor costume of that as well as the present period, of blue cloth roundabout, with many small brass buttons, coarse Osnaburg trowsers, considerably soiled, light pumps and a tarpaulin hat.

"Well, Billy," said the captain, "what luck?"

"No luck at all, as far as I am concerned," was the answer. "A short, broad-beamed lugger like me has no more chance of overhauling a trim, well-rigged craft like that long-legged fellow, who has been taking liberties with our harmless secrets, than a Dutch drogger has to beat upon a wind a Baltimore clipper."

Baltimore was even then—the reader will recollect—famed for the fleetness of her vessels.

"Where are the other two?" asked Captain Vance.

"I don't know, indeed, captain," replied Billy. "When I got to the top of the hull they were all hull down; and I thought that I had better steer for port before I had lost all my bearings. So here I am. I think, by the by, that that long-legged fellow will get the weather-gage of all of them. Do you know his name, captain?"

Billy was a privileged character with his captain, who, in fact, was generally more familiar with his men than is usual with officers in chief command.

"Yes," answered Captain Vance; "his name is Coc."

"That's just the very name for him," said the sailor. "I have often heard that, in the merchant-houses, 'Co.' sometimes stands for more than one man; and I know that this fellow is fully equal to two. Indeed, I think that he'll prove

himself too much for all of us to-night. He runs like a clipper before the wind."

The door again opened, and two seamen entered, both dressed in costumes similar to that of the last-comer before them. One was evidently a common sailor; the other was a stout, compactly-built man, about five feet six or seven inches in height, of a swarthy complexion, with dark and lowering eyes, and a generally stern and forbidding expression of countenance. His dark hair, somewhat mingled with gray, was—contrary to the usual sailor fashion—cut closely to his head; but he wore all of his grizzly, straight and uncurling beard long. He seemed to be about forty years of age.

This man interlarded his talk with many oaths of the rudest character. I prefer to omit them in reporting his conversation.

"Well, Mr. Aston," said Captain Vance, in a pleasant tone, addressing this individual, "where is your prisoner?"

"Prisoner?" was the rough answer. "I once was told of a man who was such a fool as to undertake to run a race with the moon; but he had a sight more chance of winning his race than we had of winning ours. We overtook, in the pursuit, two stupid negroes carrying a load of fish. I thought that they had probably seen him, and could, therefore, give us some information with regard to our chase; but, though I cut some tough hickory rods, and they were both well thrashed, we could get nothing out of them."

"That was useless, to say the least of it," said the captain, with some sternness. "Of course, if they had seen him, they would have told you without having been cruelly beaten."

Mr. Aston indulged himself in a few more oaths, and a heavy frown came upon his face. The captain seemed to take but little notice, however; and there was silence for a few moments. This silence was broken by Mr. Aston.

"If I knew who that spying fellow is, and where he lives, captain," he said, with more respect in his tones and manner, "I would, with your consent, take a few of the men, storm the house, capture him, and bring him aboard."

"I know the man," replied Captain Vance, "and also where he is to be found. But there is no need of resorting to the violent means which you recommend—which, by the by,

would destroy our trade here, by making it unsafe for us to visit this harbor or its neighborhood any more. I think that I have a better plan. I know well the character of the man who was watching us, and, since you started in pursuit of him, have thought of a plan by which I shall have him peaceably on board of the brig early to-morrow morning, before he shall have an opportunity of communicating with any one. Trust the matter to me; I feel not the least doubt of my success. I will speak to you further on the subject presently."

From the time that Aston, Billy and the other sailor had gone in pursuit of young Coe, the process of removing the bales and boxes of goods to the cellar had been unremittingly continued. Soon after Billy Bowsprit's return, Mr. Ashleigh had gone down into the cellar again, to resume the superintendence of the storage of the merchandise. Shortly after the close of the conversation recorded above, between the captain and the first-mate, the merchant reascended to the store-room, and announced that the goods were all safely put away. He was followed by the sailors who had been engaged in carrying down the packages.

"Come, boys," said the storekeeper, addressing those who had come with him out of the cellar; "let us put the slide and the counter back into their places, and put the store-room again in order. Our night's work will then be finished. I, for one, shall be glad of it; for I am both tired and sleepy."

In a few moments afterward—and while Captain Vance was holding a short, whispered conversation with Mr. Aston, his first-mate—the doors and windows of the store-room were made fast. Then the merchant took his way up the hill to his house, and the seafaring people—all but one—returned to the brig.

CHAPTER III.

THE EARLY VISITOR.

TELER. 'Tis a brave venture, our good master Jansen,
And needs a man of pluck to carry it.

JANSEN. Danger, say you? and mystery to back it!
Say no more, Teler—I'm the man for you.—OLD DRAMA.

MILLMONT the residence of Thomas Coe, Esq., on his plantation of the same name, near the head of St. John's creek, was a large, two-story frame building, with single-story wings. Each of these wings contained one room, with an attic above, and was connected with the main building by a short and narrow passage or entry. In one of these wings was the chamber of John Alvan Coe. It was a large room, with windows sheltered by Venetian blinds and opening almost to the floor. A large yard, shaded by several old trees, extended from the front of the house and from the gables of the wings; the garden—in the usual fashion when attached to plantation houses of that time—was on the fourth side, or in the rear of the buildings.

John Alvan Coe not only escaped from his pursuers, but arrived home before the two negro men who had accompanied him. He at once entered his room, and in a few moments—having first loaded his pistols and placed them on a table near the head of his bed, and having seen that the window-shutters were all made fast—sprung into bed, and was soon deep in that sound and refreshing sleep which fatigue always assures to healthy youth.

About four o'clock, or at the earliest "peep of day," the young man was aroused from his slumbers by a light, grating noise, made by running a stick or a finger down along the outside of the Venetian shutters of one of the windows of his room. He immediately started from his sleep.

"Who is there?" he exclaimed.

"Get up, John, and let me in, quickly," said a voice from the outside of the window. "I have something interesting to tell you."

"Is that you, Harry Marston?" asked John. "Wait a moment till I get on some of my clothes."

In a few minutes the early visitor was admitted into the chamber. It was, as John had supposed, Henry Marston, the son of a wealthy planter in the neighborhood. Being of an adventurous and roving disposition, he had been unwillingly allowed by his parents, some years before, to enter upon a seafaring life. He had risen rapidly in his chosen profession, and was now captain of the *Sea-bird*, a merchant vessel in which his father owned an interest, and which was engaged in trading between Baltimore and certain ports in the West Indies and along the Spanish main.

Young Marston was tall, slender, and gracefully formed. His hair and the slight mustache which shaded his upper lip were of a dark-brown hue. His dark, hazel eyes were expressive, at the first glance, of both gentleness and resolution; but a second and more observant look discovered something more in them—a something that created uneasiness and a want of trust. Every movement of his body seemed instinct with grace. His voice was soft and musical; but it did not at all remind you of the singing of birds or of the tones of other cheerful and innocent creatures. Still, there was a peculiar fascination in all of his speech and manner, which possessed a great influence over certain natures. The young man was, on this occasion, dressed in a handsome suit of black broadcloth.

"How are you, Harry?" exclaimed John, as soon as his visitor entered the room. "This is, indeed, a surprise, and a delightful one. When did you get back home?"

"Last night," was the answer, "or, rather, I should say this morning, since it was fully one o'clock when I got home. Everybody was aroused from sleep by my arrival; and the old folks insisted upon dressing and coming down to see me at once. All the little ones, too, came out of their nests to see the long absent Harry. Thus it was nearly three o'clock before I got a chance of retiring to my chamber; by which time the excitement of seeing so many loved ones banished from me all weariness and inclination to sleep. And this brings me to the cause of my so early visit to you."

"In the delight of seeing you," said John, "I had forgotten that subject entirely."

"When I entered my chamber," continued Henry Marston, "I found, upon the floor directly in front of the door by which I had come in, this singular and enigmatical card, enclosed in an envelope directed to my address—'Captain Henry Marston, Blue Oldfields'—the name of my father's place, you know. Remembering your fondness for adventure—we are alike in that respect, in truth—I came over here at once, to ask your assistance in developing the mystery. There is no time for delays, you see, as to-day is the twenty-first."

The young sailor handed to his friend a card, on which was written, in letters imitating print, these words:

May 21st, 1817, at 5 1-2 A. M.,

AT THE SPOUT.

The number is EIGHT.

BE PROMPT—BE TRUE.

Forget not the Pass.

"A F. E."

"What do you want me to do?" asked John, after reading the words on the card. "I can make but little meaning out of this."

"Why, of course," replied Marston, "I want you to go with me to this rendezvous. I am determined to find out the mystery. You see, there will be eight there—seven besides myself; at any rate, that is what I understand the card to mean. If any thing be wrong, I can scarcely hope to contend successfully against seven men. At an hour so early, too few, upon whom I could call for help, will be about—probably not one at that lonely place. Yet I am determined, at all hazards, to solve the mystery. If you think there is too much risk in the affair, John, I will go by myself."

"As to that matter," said John, "you know that I don't care about the risk, as you call it; so that, if you are determined to go, I will accompany you. But the affair may be only a joke; and I don't wish to do any thing that will make me the subject of laughter."

"It may be a joke to try my courage," observed Marston. "In any view of the case," he continued, after a pause, "I am determined to make the venture."

"And I shall accompany you," said John. "The place designated, I suppose, is 'The Spout' on St. Leonard's Creek?"

"Of course, it is," was the answer. "There is no other place in this neighborhood called 'The Spout.'"

"But my going with you," said John, reflectively, "may be the very cause of danger to you, since I have received no card of invitation. By the way, what is that piece of paper on the floor behind you near the door. Bless my life!" he continued, picking up the paper; "it is addressed to me, and contains, word for word, a card like the one addressed to you."

"You will go, now, I suppose, unhesitatingly," said Captain Marston.

"Certainly," was the reply. "But I had better awaken one of the servants, and leave a message for the family."

"There is no use in doing that," said Henry. "I left no message at home. We shall be back, in all probability, by the time they are up. Have you not a pair of pistols? I remember that we each bought, in Baltimore, a pair precisely alike, during my last visit home. We should go well armed and, in that condition, I think, as we are both good shots, and not at all nervous, that we shall be very nearly, if not quite, a match for the other six."

"My pistols," answered young Coe, "are here on the table, and ready for use. I loaded them immediately on my return from a drum-fishing excursion last night, on account of an adventure which befell me on my way home. This case may have something to do with that adventure."

"Ah! What is the adventure to which you refer?" asked Captain Marston, with much expression of interest.

While young Coe was relating to his friend the incidents of the night, he was also engaged in dressing. During the process of dressing, while young Coe's eyes were turned, for a moment or two, away from Marston, the latter took up the pistols which had been lying upon the table, and placed them in his pockets, and immediately afterward put upon the table

in their place another pair of pistols which were precisely similar in appearance to the former, and which he had withdrawn from another pair of pockets in his dress.

"What befell you last night," remarked the captain, when John had concluded his narrative, "can have nothing to do with the present affair, because they could not have recognized you under the circumstances; and, besides, I should not have received a card as well as you, since I had nothing to do with that adventure."

"True," replied John. "Yet I may have been recognized; who knows but that one or more persons of this neighborhood, who know me, are engaged in this smuggling business, and were there disguised? Moreover, the card sent to you also may be intended to put me off my guard."

"If you feel any uneasiness about the matter," said Captain Marston, "you had better, perhaps, not go. I shall go, however, at all risks."

"Oh!" exclaimed John, in an easy tone; "my thinking the affair a plot will not prevent me from trying to discover its meaning. If it be a trap to catch me, that trap is well set; for, what is more apt to draw one on to adventure than mystery, especially when that mystery is waited on by apparent peril? I am determined to solve the riddle, let it be attended by what danger it may be."

"Come, then," said the captain, "are you ready? If so, let us go at once. Time is pressing."

The two young men then left the house, and proceeded to the stable, where John soon prepared a handsome young blooded horse for the ride. Mounting, they rode slowly—for fear of disturbing the sleep of the household—down a lane bordered with old cherry-trees, which led from the dwelling at Millmont to the public road at the distance of a few hundred yards; but, on gaining this road, their horses were urged to a fast gallop.

The daylight was now shining broad and bright, although there was nearly half an hour to sunrise. The sky was softly blue, and clear of clouds, save a few light and fleecy ones, which sailed slowly along, seemingly far away in the depths of ether. "A dewy freshness filled the air," which was cool and bracing, and made sweet by the fragrant breath of grasses

and leaves, and of the humble wild-flowers which grew on either side of the road.

The stimulating character of the atmosphere, and the elastic motion of their steeds, stirred the blood of the young men to a more rapid circulation, and aroused them to a full enjoyment of the adventure in which they were engaged.

"What a strange and inexpressible pleasure there is in danger," said John. "There seems to me to be no enjoyment in life, unless there be obstacles to overcome, and perils to meet."

"I agree with you," said Captain Marston. "But it requires caution as well as courage to win for us in the battle of life. Has it occurred to you that we have not the password to admit us to the rendezvous?"

"No," replied John. "But what is the use of it? We have received cards of invitation, and we know the place and the hour of meeting."

"So we do," said Marston; "yet a want of knowledge of this password may give us inconvenience as well as trouble."

"Probably," suggested Coc, "the letters 'A. F. E.' are the pass-word."

"But," objected Captain Marston, "perhaps they are only the initials of it; and, in that case, the question arises—what do they stand for? It is well to be armed against all contingencies."

"True," consented John. "But, I am sure, I have no idea what they can mean. Let me think."

"Don't you remember," asked Marston, "the English story, which we read together when we were school-boys, about a mysterious secret society? Can you recollect the initials of their password?"

"Yes," was the ready reply; "they are 'O. F. A.—A. F. O.,' which, being interpreted, mean 'One for All—All for One.' Let me see! 'A. F. E.' All for each. I wonder if that is not the password in this case?"

"Very probable," assented Marston. "If necessary, let us try it, at all events."

This proposition was agreed to.

As the distance between Millmont and the Spout—over a road which traversed, in rapidly-succeeding alternations, fields

and forests, hills and plains—was fully nine miles, the two young men were obliged to put their horses to a tolerably high speed to reach the place of their destination in time. But little more conversation passed between them, therefore, until they arrived at the head of the ravine, down which their road led to the shore of St. Leonard's Creek.

CHAPTER IV.

AT THE SPOUT.

'OSSARIO. Stand, ho! Who are you?

ANTONIO. We are true men, sir.

OSSARIO. True men, give the word—and pass."—OLD PLAY."

"WALTER. Only a pleasant jest, I do assure you."—THE SORRY JOKE.

WHEN the two young men descended the ravine leading to the shore, the sun was half an hour above the horizon. Before they left the mouth of the ravine, they dismounted—at the suggestion of Captain Marston—and fastened their horses to the drooping branches of a tree which grew by the side of the road. The animals were, in this situation, out of sight of the place of rendezvous. The companions, having thus made their horses secure, advanced to the shore.

The fictions of the novelist, and those even of the poet, could find no lovelier locality, ready created for the scenes of fancied griefs and pleasures, than that contained within lines embracing St. Leonard's Creek and its immediate adjuncts. Not only is the stream itself—especially in the fair expanse near its junction with the river, which is now supposed to lie glowing and dimpling in the morning sunshine, with varying lights and shadows, before the reader's mental eyes—remarkably beautiful; but all around it—every hill and dale, every field and grove, every jutting promontory and retiring cove—partakes of the same character of preëminent loveliness.

On the southern side of the expanse mentioned, is a broad beach of white sand. From the side of a cliff which towers above this beach, flows a fountain of water, very pure, clear and cold, and equally abundant at all seasons of the year.

This fountain is known throughout a large district of surrounding country as "The Spout," and is some fifty yards from the spot where the road, leading down the ravine before mentioned, enters upon the sands.

Just as Captain Marston and John Coe stepped upon the shore, and were turning to the left-hand to seek the fountain a short and stout man about forty years of age, with long, curling locks of reddish brown hair, and a face very darkly tanned by sun and breeze, and, probably, by battle, too—to judge by the marks upon his countenance—presented himself before them.

"Stand!" exclaimed this individual, planting himself directly in front of the two young men, and presenting a cocked pistol in each hand.

"We'll see about that," said John Coe, sternly, drawing a pistol also.

But Captain Marston placed a hand upon the arm of the angry young man.

"Don't be so fast, John," he said. "Don't you see the twinkle in the fellow's eyes? I am disposed to believe that this is but a jest after all. What do you want?" he continued, addressing the sailor.

"No one can go beyond this spot," answered the stranger, "without giving the password."

"A. F. E.?" said Captain Marston, interrogatively.

"There seems to be something in that," remarked the sailor; "but it will not answer."

"How will this answer?" asked the captain. "'All for Each?'"

"All right," was the reply; "pass, gentlemen."

As the two young men walked forward, they were followed by the sailor, who still held the two pistols in his hands.

On arriving in front of the Spout, they found a beautiful row-boat, the bow of which just touched the shore. It was manned by four sturdy seamen, whose hands rested upon their oars, which were ready placed in their rowlocks. A boy, apparently between fifteen and sixteen years of age, in straw hat and light-blue trousers and jacket, occupied the stern seat. This last-mentioned person was remarkably handsome; his face was beautifully oval in its shape; its complexion was a

pale brunette (if I may use the phrase,) there being in it no tinge of red. His form was slender and graceful; his large, soft black eyes had a thoughtful, or rather a dreamy expression, and great masses of jet-black curls flowed down below his shoulders.

"Jump aboard, gentlemen," said the sailor in fancy dress, "the time is fully arrived, and we shall be expected as soon as we can make the distance. If we don't go at once, somebody will be disappointed."

"A moment, if you please, sir," said John, in a sarcastic tone and manner, and with a darkening expression of face. "May I claim the honor of knowing your name?"

"Certainly, sir," was the answer, accompanied by a mock-ceremonious bow, which did not tend to cool the rising wrath of young Coe. "My name is William Brown, better known as Billy Bowsprit. This latter name may seem, unaccompanied by a proper explanation, to derogate from the dignity of the fair position which I occupy in maritime society, and with which, by the by, I will presently make you acquainted. But it originated in what was, in fact, a compliment to my wit and my other good qualities. A highly intelligent gentleman of French inclinations—having probably been born of such a disposition, seeing that he was a native of Paris—once did me the honor, on account of some slight jocular remark which fell from me in a social hour, of saying that I was a '*beau esprit*.' The rude, unlettered sailors," he waved a hand toward those in the row-boat, "have, in their ignorance, manufactured out of this compliment, the absurd name of Bowsprit. I submit to the *soubriquet*, partly because those who use it do not know any better, but mainly because it intimates a just compliment, seeing that, as the bowsprit is in advance of the ship, so do I take the lead of all on ship-board in all affairs where either sagacity or boldness is required."

"Well, Mr. Brown," began young Coe—

"Allow me, if you please, sir," said Bowsprit, interrupting him, and making at the same time a low and apologetic bow; "I have not yet finished the catalogue of myself, a desire to become acquainted with which was intimated in your polite and very flattering inquiry. Permit me to add, to what I have already said, that I fill the honorable post of first-mate on

board of as beautiful a little craft as eye was ever blessed with seeing."

The reader will, perhaps, be surprised at the great apparent improvement in the language of Billy Bowsprit since his first introduction in the second chapter. The fact is, that individual had received what is called a good ordinary education, and prided himself upon his ability to talk in either good English, or in what he styled "sailors' lingo."

"Well, Mr. Brown, better known as Billy Bowsprit," said John Coe, in a tone of voice, expressive of both anger and resolution, as soon as the voluble sailor gave him an opportunity of speaking, "I wish you to know that I do not allow myself to be dealt with in this summary manner. I shall return home, and any man who interferes with me, will do so at his imminent peril."

Saying this, he drew both of his pistols, setting the hammers with his thumbs in the act of drawing them from his pockets.

Billy Bowsprit raised the pistol which was in his right hand, and was about to pull the trigger, when, at a slight and rapid sign from Captain Marston, who stood a little in the rear of young Coe, he suddenly pointed the muzzles of both pistols toward the ground. At the same moment the captain drew both of his pistols also, and placed himself by the side of John.

"Come," he said, addressing Billy Bowsprit in a really stern voice, "if this is a jest—as I think it is—we have had enough of it. Tell us what you want, and what the whole of this singular affair means."

"Why, sir," replied the seaman, in a somewhat crest-fallen tone, "no harm has been meant to either of you all the while; and if this young gentleman," looking at John, "hadn't been quite so fiery, every thing would have been explained to you some time ago. The fact is, my captain is an old acquaintance of both of you; he hasn't seen either of you for years, and so is very anxious to see you both, if only for a short time. He wants you to come and take breakfast with him this morning. He had business with the schooner up the river here as far as Benedict, to land a cargo of goods. He has to get to Baltimore as soon as possible, but was determined to see you both first. So he landed me early yesterday

morning, on this side of the river, opposite Benedict, to carry a message to you. But not knowing the latitude and longitude of that part of the country, I was obliged to take bearings and to make observations so often, that I did not arrive in your neighborhood till after midnight; and I did not, of course, like to waken up families who were strangers to me at such a time of night. The notion about the cards was one of my own—a kind of experiment. I know how much curiosity there is in the world; and I felt certain, therefore, of seeing you two gentlemen here this morning."

"Thank you for the compliment, Mr. Bowlegs—I beg your pardon—Bowsprit," said the captain. "You seem to be somewhat of a philosopher—you carry out a plan with so much coolness, so much self-possession, being always on your guard neither to act nor to speak hastily or unadvisedly."

There was evidently sarcasm, if not irony, in the captain's remarks.

The sailor bowed merely; he seemed to be—to use a common expression—"struck dumb."

Young Coe laughed heartily. Yet he must doubtless have felt somewhat abashed at the conviction that Marston's course, of treating the affair as a farce, was decidedly more successful than his own, of viewing it as a melodrama.

There was silence for a minute or two, during which all the pistols which had been drawn were put out of sight. At length the stillness was broken by John.

"How did you manage to get your card or note into my room?" he asked of the sailor.

"Allow me to keep that secret to myself," answered Billy Bowsprit, with a smile, holding out in his hand at the same time, however, several skeleton keys. "But you are not to suppose, Mr. Coe, that these keys show that I have any bad habits; I have never used them except in such innocent ventures as the present."

John took the skeleton keys in his hand; he had never seen such instruments before.

"I don't think" he remarked, returning the keys, "that any one of those could possibly unlock my outer door."

"One must understand the use of them," replied Billy Bowsprit. "I have others, however."

"How did you so readily make your way to this point?" asked Captain Marston of Billy Bowsprit.

"Why, sir," was the reply, "I have been over this road before, many years ago now. On that occasion, I was for a short time at the houses of both your father and Mr. Coe's. I came here because this was the place where this boat here was to meet you two gentlemen and myself."

"Who is this friend of ours who wants to see us, Mr. Bowsprit—I mean Mr. Brown?" asked John.

"I beg your pardon, sir," was the answer. "My captain particularly ordered me not to tell you; he wanted, he said, to give you a pleasant surprise."

"What do you say, John?" asked Captain Marston. "Shall we accept the invitation of this unknown friend?"

"If we knew what to do with our horses," said John, "and I could get a note home to tell them what has become of me, I should say 'yes' at once."

"If that is all that is in the way, gentlemen," said Mr. Brown, *alias* Bowsprit, "get your notes ready at once. Here, Tom," he continued, addressing the youth, who was sitting on the stern seat of the row-boat, "do you know the way to Millmont and to Blue Oldfields?"

"If I don't, I can inquire, sir," answered the boy.

"Then, as soon as you get the notes which these gentlemen want you to deliver at their houses," said Bowsprit, "take their horses, which you will find just behind those trees, *there*," (pointing,) "where the road corners with the shore; and, as soon as you can do so, deliver notes and horses to their proper addresses. You will then walk down to Drum Point where we shall be by that time, and we will there take you aboard."

"Aye, aye, sir," said the boy.

While these directions were being given, Captain Marston had drawn a note-book and a couple of lead-pencils from his pocket. Tearing a blank leaf from the book, he handed that and one of the pencils to John. Using their hats as writing-desks, the two young men soon finished their notes and handed them to the boy, who immediately started on his mission.

The four men in the boat had been merely lookers-on and listeners in respect to what had been taking place on the shore.

When the boy took his departure, Captain Marston, John Coe and Billy Bowsprit leaped into the boat.

‘Will you steer, Captain Marston, if you please?’ asked Bowsprit.

“With pleasure,” answered the captain.

“Then, if Mr. Coe will take his seat with you at the stern,” said the sailor, “I will take my place at the bow, and act as lookout.”

The seats were taken, and the boat having been driven from the shore by one or two backward strokes of the oars, her head was turned down the creek. The supple rowers bending “with a will” to the elastic blades, the light craft fleetly bounded on her course over the glowing tide of St Leonard’s, toward the broad Clearwater, which lay before them, in the morning sunshine, as ever bright and beautiful.

CHAPTER V.

ON BOARD OF THE SCHOONER.

‘*Sebastian.* How are you friends?’

I’m very glad to see you.”—AS YOU WILL.

‘*Toby.* Who are these men, sir?’

Wily Will. They’re travelers only.”—THE MASQUERADE.

THE row-boats, carrying John, Captain Harry Marston, Billy Bowsprit and the four seamen, leaving the mouth of St. Leonard’s Creek, entered upon that largest and fairest of the several lake-like expanses of the Clearwater—being six miles in length and three in width—which lies between Point Providence on the southeast and Solitary Point on the northwest.

On gaining an offing sufficient to give the occupants of the boat a view commanding the whole of this expanse, only one vessel was in sight. This was a graceful little schooner of about thirty tons burden, which lay at anchor on a part of the river called “The Flats,” situated on the eastern side of the stream; she was in a position southeast of Otter Point, directly in front of Hungerford’s Creek, and about a mile and a

half from Point Patience. An easy row of three-quarters of an hour, over the crystal-seeming waters, which were but slightly stirred by a slight wind, brought the boat from the Spout alongside of this schooner.

A vessel so small required no steps to ascend her sides ; and the occupants of the row-boat soon leaped upon the deck. They were there met by a young man about five feet and a half in height, with blue eyes, light, flaxen hair, and cheeks which, originally fair, were somewhat tanned by exposure to sun, wind and weather. He was dressed in roundabout and pantaloons of light blue cloth, pumps, and light straw hat.

"How are you, John? how are you, Harry?" he exclaimed, shaking hands with Coe and Marston, with much appearance of cordiality. "I am very glad to see you. I hope that you are not offended with the ruse which I used to bring you to see me for a short time? I feared that, if you knew that it was only I, you would not take the trouble to come to see me."

Both of the young men assured him that a ruse was not at all necessary—it was very near preventing them from coming ; and that, had they only known at once that it was their old school-friend, George Dempster, who wanted to see them, there would have been no hesitation on their part in coming to visit him.

John Coe was much surprised at finding George Dempster—who had been his classmate at Princeton, and who was the oldest son of a planter in good circumstances on the eastern shore of Maryland—occupying the position of "skipper" of a small bay-craft ; politeness, however, prevented him from making any allusion to what seemed to him so singular.

Captain Dempster—to give him the title generally bestowed in courtesy upon the commander of the smallest trading craft, on the Chesapeake Bay, at least—invited his old friends to come at once into his cabin.

Here a mahogany table was handsomely set out, being spread with a fine linen diaper cloth, and being covered with a porcelain breakfast set. Cushioned mahogany seats for four surrounded the table.

The steward—or he who in a vessel so small generally performs the duties of both that officer and of cook—had apparently

already received his orders, for scarcely had the captain, his mate and his two friends entered the cabin, when breakfast was placed on the table. Fragrant coffee, light rolls, fresh butter, ham and eggs, fried crocuses and soft crabs, formed the repast.

"You may think it strange, my friends," said Captain Dempster, while the party of four were partaking of the meal, for which the bracing morning air and their early ride and row had given my hero and Captain Marston keen appetites, "that you find me in this position. The matter is easily explained, however. It is due to a compromise, agreed to by my father and myself, between my extreme views in favor of a life on the ocean and his extreme views in favor of a life for me on the land. Thus I can indulge to a limited extent, my preference for a seafaring life; and he can enjoy what he honors me by calling the pleasure of seeing me frequently. I confess that I would much prefer a life on the open sea; but one must not be disobedient to an affectionate and generally indulgent father."

While the three friends—Mr. Bowsprit had left the table, as soon as his appetite was satisfied, to attend to duties upon deck—sat over their claret, talking of "old days," as, even when young, we fondly call them, hours sped on. In the mean time the anchor had been secured on board, the sails hoisted, and the vessel had laid her course down the river, impelled by a light wind from the west. Point Patience was soon rounded, and, in two hours and a half or three hours from the time of leaving her anchorage, the schooner had passed down the lowest reach of the Clearwater, and had rounded to at the extreme end of Drum Point, to take on board the lad who had been sent to deliver the horses and notes of John Alvan Coe and Captain Marston to their respective homes. The boy made excellent speed, and was waiting at the place of rendezvous when the schooner was still some miles from the Point.

"Why, Dempster," said young Coe, seeing that they had passed Drum Point Harbor, "you are not going out upon the bay, are you?"

"I have to take off a load of cord-wood," was the answer, "from the shore near the old Eltonhead Manor-house, this side of Cove Point. We shall there be but little farther from

your home than here at Drum Point ; and I want to see all that I can of both of you. But think, Coe, of my carrying a load of fire-wood to Baltimore !

“ ‘To what base uses we may come, Horatio.’ ”

“ But how are Marston and myself to get home this evening ? ” asked John.

“ Oh ! as to that matter,” was the answer, “ I can borrow horses from Mr. Chew, whose house is but a few miles from Eltonhead ; and the boy Tom, who took your horses home this morning, can go with you, and bring back the ‘ animals.’ But I hope that you will not return until the morning ; let me spend at least one evening with you.”

“ What do you say, Marston ? ” asked John, who was enjoying the society of his friends very much. “ I have not seen that lonely old Eltonhead house since I was a school-boy ; and I should like to see it again, especially if we could visit it ‘ by the glimpses of the moon ’ to-night, since it has now—and has had for some time, I believe—the reputation of being haunted. I hardly think that they would feel uneasy at home on account of my continued absence, as I merely said in my note that I was going to visit a friend on board of his vessel.”

“ If you are agreed, let us stay,” replied Marston. “ I should like to revisit the old house myself, especially as you say, to

“ ‘Visit it by the pale moonlight.’ ”

“ And, if you gentlemen desire it,” said Captain Dempster, “ I will have some hammocks swung this evening in the old manor-house. We will pass the night there, and will thus—to take a liberty with Sir Walter Scott’s verse—dare

“ ‘To brave the witches in their den,
The spirits in their hall.’ ”

This proposition being very agreeable to both Coe and Marston, they consented to continue as Captain Dempster’s guests until the morning.

The three young men remained upon deck to enjoy the glorious day and the beautiful and rapidly shifting scenes presented to their view, as the schooner skirted, within a few hundred yards of the beach, the northern shore of Patuxent Roads—a sheet of water which is, in fact, (as I have before

mentioned, I think,) a gulf or widening of the Cheasapeake Bay at the mouth of the Clearwater river. While the three friends were gaily chatting, inspired by the cheering influence of their surroundings, Mr. Bowsprit walked up to the commander of the little craft.

"Captain Dempster," he said, "I think those sailors in the hold and forecastle will be getting into a state of mutiny soon, if we don't let them come out upon deck. They say that their quarters are too close."

"Tell them," replied the skipper, "that they can come up as soon as they please; we are now fairly out of the Clearwater—at least, out of sight of Drum Point Harbor."

The sheet of water called Patuxent Roads is by some considered to be a part of the Clearwater river.

"These men of whom Mr. Brown speaks," continued Captain Dempster, addressing his two friends, "are some newly-discharged United States seamen, whom I am taking to Baltimore. I had a load of freight to carry from Baltimore to Portsmouth. At the latter place these men applied to me for passage to the former city. I told them that I had freight to take from Portsmouth to Benedict, and then a load of wood to carry to Baltimore. As they did not care much for the delay, I bargained to take them to Baltimore, and to charge them only for what their board while on the schooner might be worth, on condition that they would help us to load and to unload. I did not wish so many men to be seen on board of my craft while in the river, since such an incident would probably subject me to the delay of a search by the revenue officer, who, having but little to do, naturally wishes to make the most of his office."

About thirty rough, sunburned and weather-beaten men now came upon the deck. Among them was almost every variety of dress which nautical fashions then allowed; but the cloth roundabouts and tarpaulin hats prevailed. They kept away from the after-part of the deck, gathering in groups amidships and toward the bow. They seemed to be in fine spirits, as frequent bursts of somewhat subdued laughter came from the different groups.

Little did young Coe think that he was the subject of their merriment.

It was scarcely half an hour after these men came upon deck when the schooner anchored about fifty yards from the beach, at a point where long ranks of pine and oak cord-wood were ranged along the edge of the cliff, which was here but from twenty to twenty-five feet high. A large flatboat, oblong in shape, and of the kind commonly called "scow," was lying on rollers far up on the beach and close under the cliff.

As soon as the anchor was dropped overboard and the sails lowered and secured, the row-boat—which had been hanging from the davits at the stern of the schooner since the lad had been taken aboard at Drum Point—was forthwith let down into the water. It had to make three trips from the schooner to the shore before the unusually large number of hands were all landed. Then the scow was at once pushed into the water. Some of the seamen soon ascended the cliff by a small ravine near at hand; and the work of throwing down the wood to the beach, pitching it to the water's edge, and piling it into the scow was at once commenced.

Our hero and his two friends passed the rest of the day, to all appearances, very pleasantly together; there was so much to say to each other of what young people call, queerly enough, "old times," so much that each had to tell to the others of what had occurred to himself since their last meeting. About an hour after the schooner came to anchor they took their dinner—which comprised "all the luxuries of the season"—in the elegant little cabin. Mr. Bowsprit was present at this meal, and added to the enjoyment of it by his unique and pleasant sallies. This joyous individual was with them only at dinner; his duty required him to attend to the loading of the vessel. The dinner of the hands, by the way, was sent ashore to them and eaten under the shade of the trees upon the cliff.

CHAPTER VI.

AT THE OLD MANOR HOUSE.

"A prisoner, did'st thou say? O, gracious heaven!
Have mercy on my parents and my friends,
And for uncertainty let them not too long suffer!
Oh speedily set me free!"—ANON.

Cyrus. Who art thou, fair and gentle princess?

Myranda. Knight,

I am, alas! unfortunate; but yet

I wish thee well, and fain would do thee service.

—ROMANCE OF SIR CYRUS.

"I will not do it, lady; speak no more."—THE TEMPTED.

ABOUT half an hour after the dinner was concluded, the three young friends were taken ashore in the jolly-boat. Leaving the beach, they pursued a path through a dense forest for about half a mile, when they came into a small opening in the woods, in the centre of which stood the old brick building known as Eltonhead Manor-house, surrounded by its out-houses, all of brick. The opening in which this old-time mansion stood had evidently been in former days much more extensive, for among the small pine-trees covering the ground in that part of the forest nearest to the old house, the earth still distinctly bore the impress of corn-rows, the marks of former cultivation of that species of grain first obtained from the red man.

Desolation marked the spot. The yard and garden walls were broken down in many places; the gate at the end of the short avenue had fallen and now lay in ruins. The shade trees in the yard and avenue needed pruning; scions from their roots had sprung up in all directions. Even at this early season weeds spread over the yard and garden, and closed the gateways; yet the building itself was in comparatively good preservation.

It was not by any means such a mansion as in Great Britain would be suggested to the mind by the title of manor-house. It was built of bricks imported from England, and the walls were of such thickness that, though time had, in passing over them, stamped his impress upon them in weather-stains and

moss and lichen, they stood still, apparently, as firm as when first erected. The house was two stories high ; on the floor of the first story, a wide hall passed through the centre of the building, with two very large rooms on each side of it. The second story, and the attle to some extent, corresponded to the first ; a broad staircase led upward from the hall on the ground floor. Some pieces of old and almost worn-out furniture remained in the building, one or two heavy old tables, and a dozen or so huge and very old-fashioned oaken chairs. In one of the rooms down-stairs were two or three rude settees or benches, left by some tenant who had used the premises since they had been deserted by their proper occupants.

During the afternoon Captain Dempster and his guests rambled through the woods and along the bay shore. When they had concluded their ramble and returned to the old manor-house, the shades of twilight were gathering. They found that three hammocks, intended for their night's rest, had been swung in one of the large rooms of the second story, and in another room on the same floor, a plentiful and well-lighted board was spread for supper. On a chair beside the supper table was an open hamper of champagne, beside which was a pack of playing cards. The intention of Captain Dempster was declared by himself to be to pass the evening at whist, admitting Mr. Brown, *alias* Billy Bowsprit, to complete the necessary party of four ; the game to be enlivened by an occasional glass of wine. No game of whist was played that evening, however. John Coe, after he had finished his supper and taken one or two glasses of champagne, was obliged to plead overwhelming drowsiness, which he attributed to the interesting character and unusual excitement of the day.

Although early in going to bed, yet it was late in the morning when the young man awoke. On looking around him he found that the other hammocks in the room were vacant.

Springing out of bed he hurried to the door ; it was locked. The windows were all down. On throwing open the sash of one of them and looking out, he saw a man with a musket on his shoulder, who was promenading to and fro in the yard below, and keeping an eye on the windows of his room. It seemed, then, that he was guarded as if a prisoner. He called

out to the man who was apparently keeping watch in the court below.

"What do you want?" asked the guard.

"Where are Captain Dempster and Captain Marston?" exclaimed John.

"I don't know of whom you are talking," answered the guard. "I only know that Captain Vance and Lieutenant Seacome took supper with you last night, after which you got drunk and had to be put to bed; and that Captain Vance—my captain—said that you were on no account to leave the house. That is all I know about the matter, sir."

"I was not drunk," said young Coe; "I took but two glasses of wine after supper. There must be some mistake somewhere. The gentlemen with whom I supped last night are two of my oldest friends. I never dreamed that they were capable, nor can I yet believe that they are, of treachery toward me."

"I don't understand what you are talking about," said the man with the musket. "I only know that our orders are not only to keep you within this house, but not to let any one come near enough to the house to hear a human voice from it, even when raised to its highest pitch. We are also ordered, if you make a very loud call, to shoot you at once. We have nearly thirty men here; guards are placed all around the building, and scouts are spread all through the country for a mile around. My own impression is, Mr. Coe (that is your name, I believe)—but it is, after all, only my opinion, mind you—that you are a very close prisoner. Moreover, I believe that I am authorized in saying to you, that you are a prisoner to men from whom no one ever yet escaped alive. So, close your window, and make the best of your situation."

John left the window and walked to the door, which he found locked.

On turning his face from the door he noticed, for the first time, in his astonishment at his situation, that a table was already neatly spread, near the middle of the room, with a clean, white damask table-cloth, upon which a handsome breakfast-set of china-ware was arranged, with chairs, plates, knives and forks, cups and saucers for two; but no viands were yet set out upon the board.

The sight of the table so spread, creating in him a fear of being surprised by the entrance of a visitant before his toilet was completed, caused him to hurry on his dress. He found a pair of pistols in his pockets; they seemed to be his own; but, on examining them closely, he found not the private mark which he had placed on each one of them, soon after they were purchased, to distinguish them from Henry Marton's. It was evident that the reëxchange of pistols, by which his own should have been returned to him, had either been overlooked or intentionally avoided by his captors the night before.

Scarcely had his hasty toilet been completed, for which he had found in the room water, towels and soap, looking-glass, combs, brushes, shaving-instruments, and even scented oils and waters—when the door opened, and two of the seamen came in, bringing the covers for breakfast. They placed upon the table the dishes which they carried, and then immediately retired, taking with them the three hammocks, and removing all vestiges of the room having been slept in.

Shortly after they retired, two or three light taps were given to the door; and a soft and musical female voice was heard asking permission to enter.

“Enter if you can,” he said.

The door was opened again; and what seemed to be a vision of loveliness entered. This vision was a lady, rather above than under the ordinary height, with a form as graceful as imagination can conceive. Her face was oval in shape, her complexion was very pure olive, beautifully tinged with rose. Her features were neither perfectly Grecian nor perfectly Roman, but of a style where the two were equally and beautifully blended. Her eyes were of jet black, and of wonderful brightness; and her hair, of raven hue, was confined by a circlet of large pearls, with a single brilliant jewel above the forehead, and fell, in heavy and tastefully-arranged masses of curls, all around her head, to below her shoulders. Her dress was of rich black silk, elegantly fitted to her shape and ornamented, on the flounces of the skirt and above the elbows of the loose sleeves, with thick and glossy fringes of the same hue and material as the dress. Light golden bracelets, ornamented each with pearls and a single diamond,

encircled her wrists. As she advanced into the room, her very small and well-shaped feet---covered with a pair of light, black satin slippers, with high heels and festooned with light gold buckles, flashing with tiny jewels---peeped in and out from under the sweeping folds of her skirts.

This lady advanced gracefully to the head of the table, making an elegant courtesy to the astonished John, and inviting him, by a polite motion of the head, to take a seat at the board.

"A pleasant morning to you, Mr. Coe," she said.

"I should thank you for your good wish," answered the young man; "but, lady, I am a prisoner, I am informed. I have, it seems, been betrayed by those whom I thought my friends. Oh, madam! of all the pains in the world, the greatest is that which is caused by having been betrayed by those in whom we had unlimited faith."

"There are cases in which that which seems to be treason is friendship in disguise. It was no wish to do you injury which caused you to be taken prisoner; but your friends wished to have you always with them, to see your powerful mind 'burgeon and bloom' in a soil in which it can perfect its beauty and its strength. Had harm been intended toward you, I should not have been left here; it was thought that I might devise ways of making captivity more bearable to you. I fear that this opinion only flattered me."

John was young, and, therefore impressible; he could but feel the spell of so dazzling a presence. What could he do but make such answer as the lady had sought to obtain?

"So much beauty, madam," he said with *empressement*, "has power to lessen the pain of the most wretched captivity."

"You are improving vastly," said the lady, with a bright and fascinating smile. "We shall, I see, be very good friends, indeed. But the fact that we shall have to pass nearly, if not quite two weeks together, requires that you should have for me some less formal title than 'madam.' Call me, hereafter, Ada."

"You still leave me in doubt, madam. I can not take the liberty of addressing you familiarly by your Christian name."

The lady seemed, for a moment, to be in thought.

"Know me, then," she at length said, "as Miss Ada Revere."

"Your face is strangely familiar to me," said John.

"You saw me yesterday morning," answered the lady, with a sad smile, "at the Spout on St. Leonard's creek. You remember the lad who took charge of your and Captain Marston's notes and horses?"

Young Coe's countenance expressed much surprise and interest. But Miss Revere gave him no opportunity to speak.

"But I have known you much longer ago than that," she continued, after making but little pause—"long before either of us knew that there was evil or deceit in the world. I may, perhaps, by-and-by, tell you my sad history;" (an expression of intense pain passed over the beautiful face;) "but this is no time for such a narrative. Your own position requires consideration and action; and our first thoughts must be given to that."

"Can you explain to me," asked John, "why I was captured, and why I am held as a prisoner?"

"Yes," answered the lady; "and I am authorized to give you the information which you ask. I was not at the store at Drum Point the night before last, when you were seen by Captain Vance to look in at the window while certain goods were being conveyed to their secret depository; but I know all that took place. Ruin to Mr. Ashleigh, and great injury to all connected with the brig would have been the certain result of your making publicly known what you had discovered. The first thought was to pursue and capture you at once; and the attempt to do so was made. That attempt was, as you know, a failure. The proposition was then made—as you were known to more than one of the brig's company—to seize you at once at your father's house. This proposition was made by one whom I hate—a man the enormity of whose villany I have no words to express; I have no doubt that, had his proposal been acceded to, you would have been killed, instead of captured. Captain Marston saved you from such a fate; he thought you might be enticed from your home, and even induced to join the ship's company. He has a great affection for you, as an old schoolmate and friend

he has told me, with his own lips, that there is no living man for whom he has greater regard than for yourself."

"I do not, without much painful feeling, oppose a lady's views," said our hero, "and yours seem to agree with those of Captain Marston; but it would not be fair in me to allow you to entertain opinions so incorrect as are Captain Marston's in the respects to which you refer. True, I have been made a prisoner in the manner in which he had thought that I could be captured; so far his views were correct. But he does not understand my character entirely; I can be led—alas! too easily—even perhaps, to do what my moral sense disapproves of; but I can not be driven. Had I been attacked in my father's house by open force, I do not think that I should have been captured; I had arms at hand, and should have resisted to the death. My father is himself a strong, sensible, and brave man; the negroes would have fought for both. We might, at least, have held out until the neighborhood could have been aroused; and the result, instead of being disastrous to me, might have been ruinous to the assailants. As to Captain Marston's impression that I might be induced to join a ship's company, or any other company, engaged in illicit trade—especially without my father's consent—such a notion proves that he understands, and but to a small extent, only the outside of my character; my inner, and real life, is to him as a thoroughly sealed book."

The lady reflected for some moments. She hardly knew how to act with the case before her. She saw clearly that he felt the power of her beauty; but that beauty, she began to think, would have no influence to change his opinions. She had been placed in the position in which we find her for the purpose of inducing young Coe to join the company of the brig; she was authorized to offer him a new office in that company which was to be created especially for him, that of commander of a kind of marine corps, to be organized especially on his account, and the chief officer of which organization, should he become popular with his men, might have the power to defy the authority of the captain of the brig himself, or even to supersede him.

Miss Ada Revere, as she called herself, determined, after

some reflection, to pursue the subject no further for the present.

"We shall be prisoners in this house, Mr. Coe," she added after a few moments silence, "for some weeks, while the *Sea-bird* is discharging and receiving freight, and perhaps undergoing some necessary repairs. In the mean time, it will be my duty to use my best efforts to make your captivity bearable. We have the materials here for chess, drafts and backgammon. I sing a little, and also play upon several musical instruments; but only one instrument of the kind is here—a guitar. Should you wish to take a glass of wine, there are specimens of several vintages at hand. And believe, at any rate, that, whatever may happen, I am entirely your friend."

The lady was evidently in earnest in this last declaration. John made a proper acknowledgment; and in a few moments, the two were engaged in a game of chess.

CHAPTER VII.

ON BOARD OF THE BRIG.

1 'OTHARIO.—Remove the prisoner; the foe is near."—THE SEA-WITCH.

"He manned himself with dauntless air,
Returned the chief his haughty stare.

* * * * *

Come one, come all!

* * * * *

"Fear naught—nay, that I need not say—
But doubt not aught from mine array.

Thou art my guest."—LADY OF THE LAKE.

MORE than a week passed, and still John Coe was a prisoner at the old manor-house. No chance of escape presented itself; and neither offers of money nor threats affected his guards. Yet, but for the name of captivity, and the thought of what might be in store for him in the future, his time would have passed pleasantly. Miss Ada Revere—as the lady chose to call herself—exerted all her talents and

accomplishments to cause his time to pass agreeably. Games at chess and cards, books of poetry and romance, music of the guitar, and songs sung with charming taste, and accompanied by that fascinating instrument, varied her day and evening entertainments for the prisoner.

As great as was the interest which he felt in her who made his captivity pleasant, and as much aroused, therefore, as was his curiosity to know what was meant by her declaration that he and she had known each other in earlier days, he could not induce her to tell him to what she referred; he could only obtain from her the promise that she would at some future time make him acquainted with her history.

Miss Ada Revere had been commissioned by those who held John in captivity, not only to make his imprisonment more bearable, but also, to endeavor to persuade him to join Captain Vance's band. In the former task the reader has seen that she was successful; but the latter seemed to her to be so hopeless, that she did not even attempt it; she contented herself by persuading him to yield so far to circumstances as to pretend to be inclined to join them, that he might by such means have some chance of securing an opportunity to escape. The violent indignation—to call the feeling by a mild name—which young Coe entertained against his pretended friends, Marston and Dempster, he made no secret of to the lady; but the earnest desire which he cherished to have each of them before him at the pistol's mouth or the sword's point, he kept to himself.

Some ten or twelve days after that upon which young Coe had been so skilfully allured to imprisonment at the old manor-house, the brig *Sea-bird* Captain Henry Marston, dropped anchor "off" the Eltonhead landing. She had needed no repairs, and her unlading and relading in Baltimore had been executed with the greatest dispatch.

Without resistance, John allowed himself to be taken from the manor-house on board the brig. Where opposition would have been certainly unavailing, the attempt to make it would have been only a compromise of his dignity.

As the moon was in its first quarter, that orb had long since ~~not~~ when the long-boat and jolly-boat belonging to the brig

returned from the shore to the vessel, both heavily laden with the men who had been left at the manor-house—those in the smaller boat having young Coe among them as prisoner. A single lantern, held by one of the seamen at the gangway, showed but a dim outline of the deck and rigging of the brig, as those newly arrived climbed her sides. John had but a short time to make observations, as he was at once hurried down into the after-cabin, and through that, into a small and neat state-room forward of it. He parted with Miss Ada Revere immediately on gaining the deck. There was much expression of pain and uneasiness in the face of the mysterious young girl when she shook hands, on parting with the prisoner at the gangway, and whispered to him, "Be firm and hopeful, and do not give way to anger, however just."

When all had embarked, the boats were secured on deck, the anchor lifted, the sails hoisted, and the brig, impelled by a fair and light but freshening breeze from the north, sped on her course, over the broad, bold waters of the Chesapeake toward the wide Atlantic.

When a bright and cloudless morning, near the middle of June, arose in beauty over the wide and flashing expanse of the lower Chesapeake, old Point Comfort lay in sight, but far away on the starboard-bow. A number of bay-crafts, and a few sea-going vessels were scattered here and there, at points nearer or more distant, over the bright surface. The smoke of no steamer was seen; such vessels were at that period very rare, not only on the waters of the Chesapeake, but over the whole world.

At this time, John was confined to his state-room; he had arisen and dressed, but, on trying the door of his room, had found it locked. None of the seamen, either, except those consisting of the watch, were allowed to come upon deck while the brig was in such confined waters; such a large number of hands being seen would not comport with the *Sea-bird's* character of a peaceful merchant vessel.

The wind continuing to blow fair, although still somewhat light, the afternoon had advanced but two or three hours when the brig had passed out between the capes and was at sea, and entirely out of sight of land. All were now allowed to come upon deck, John among them, to find upon

the quarter-deck Captains Marston and Dempster. Near to them stood Mr. Bowsprit, Mr. Afton, and Ada Revere—the latter wearing her sailor-boy dress. The rest of the crew were mostly on the deck amidships; some few were in the bows, and a group was gathered but a little forward of the quarter-deck.

“Well, John,” said Captain Marston, “I hope that you have made up your mind to join us. I can offer you a respectable position. We have very nearly fifty men, all told; I shall form thirty of these into a company of marines, and offer you the post of commander of this newly-made corps. But, before I proceed any further, let me introduce you to some of your new shipmates. This old friend of ours, whom you know now, I suppose, as my first-mate, Mr. Dempster, becomes my first-lieutenant, Mr. Seacome, when we enter the tropics; at the same time your humble servant takes the more convenient name of Captain Vance, and this good brig, the *Sea-bird*, becomes the *Falcon*—the free rover. This is my second mate, Mr. Afton, who prefers to change, under such circumstances, his title only, and to be called Second-lieutenant Afton.”

This burly and savage-looking individual growled an oath or two about not being afraid of his own name.

“This joyous individual,” continued the captain, motioning his hand toward another of the party, “is my third-mate, or lieutenant, and selects his *sobriquet* for his roving name—that is, Third-mate Brown becomes Third-lieutenant Bowsprit. You have already met this jolly person. You are also, I presume, well acquainted, by this time, with this young gentleman, Master Revere, my clerk.”

At mentioning this last name, Captain Marston, with a slightly sarcastic expression of countenance, waved his hand toward Ada Revere. She cast her eyes to the deck, and a vivid blush spread over her beautiful face. Even in the midst of his own trouble, John could not help feeling pity for the poor girl. Often had the questions recurred to him: “What is her real position on board of this vessel? What is her history?” Sympathy with her lonely condition, and the wrongs which he felt that she must have received from one leading member, at least, of the brig’s company, strengthened

the indignation which he experienced on account of his own injuries, and probably caused him to forget all prudence in answering Captain Marston's addresses to him.

"You, Captain Marston," he said, in a firm and perfectly collected manner, and with a certain intensity of voice which intimated that he felt more than he spoke, "address me in calm tones and familiarly, as if you had done me no wrong to destroy the intimacy and kind feelings which existed between us in past years. In speaking thus, you add insult to injury, your words, manner and voice suggesting that I am so simple, so very weak in intellect, as not to be able to appreciate the inexpressibly gross outrage which has been committed against me."

"You do me wrong," said Captain Marston, "in supposing for a moment that I doubt that you possess a very unusual degree of intellect; I have always considered you one of the most remarkably endowed men, both in mind and body, with whom I ever met. In what other manner could I have spoken? and what was the use of my speaking with excitement? That you must remain with us, is a fixed fact. You have learned things the public knowledge of which would ruin Mr. Ashleigh, implicate—if an investigation should take place—the character of some gentlemen of the highest standing in Baltimore, or even endanger their safety—to say nothing of the security and interests of those among whom you are now standing. Self-preservation is the first law of nature; and you obliged us to make and hold you a prisoner, by informing yourself wilfully of secrets important to us, and of not the least concern to you. You have yourself alone to blame for the situation in which you are placed."

"Every citizen," replied the spirited young man, "has not only a right, but it is his duty, if an opportunity occurs, to investigate whatsoever appears to him to be a breach of the laws of his country."

"That remark does not affect us at all," answered Marston, "although it may have justified, to yourself and others, your curiosity and interference. Our duty is to defend ourselves against the laws."

"With the view which you take of the matter," retorted John, feeling offended and irritated by Marston's application to

him of the words "curiosity and interference," and determined to retort at all hazards to language which appeared to him personally insulting, "I should not have so much cause to complain had I been captured by open force; but my kind feelings toward yourself were played upon in a treacherous and cowardly manner to work out my own injury."

A dark and lowering scowl came upon the face of Captain Marston, and he placed his right hand in his bosom as if to draw a weapon.

At the same instant Aston drew a pistol from one of his pockets and raised it.

"Do you dare," he cried, "to call our captain a coward?"

Captain Marston, however, who seemed not yet to have overcome his rage sufficiently to speak, suddenly grasped Aston's weapon and drew it from his hand.

"This is courage, truly!" said young Coe, with bitter irony expressed in his voice, and addressing Aston. "You are *very* brave in assaulting an unarmed man. You would feel and act very differently, if you and I were alone, and equally armed.

"Captain," exclaimed Aston, "what is the use of bandying words with this fool? Let us settle the matter at once by shooting him and throwing him overboard. We needn't fear his betraying us then. 'Dead men tell no tales.'"

"Leave him to me," said Captain Marston, moving his hand toward Aston. Then, addressing John, he continued: "You take advantage, John Coe, of our relative positions; you know that I, as a brave man, can not, while surrounded by my band, resent an insult from an unarmed prisoner. If I am a smuggler—and perhaps even what you would call a pirate—you know that I can not so sacrifice my manhood as to take advantage of the means at my command to punish the gross insult which you have offered me."

"If you boast so much of your manhood, which word also implies your honor, such as it is," said John, "and feel so wounded at what I have said, the same power which you possess over your band to bring them against me, should also be strong enough to prevent them from interfering while I render you the satisfaction for which you seem to long. Here, in the sight of your men, with no friend to see what is called fair

play, I am willing to fight you with sword, pistol, or gun. Yes, I will do so, even though they may kill me should I defeat you, the moment after; for I had as lief die as be debarred my liberty or be obliged to yield my actions to the expediency which is merely suggested by opposing force."

"I thank you for your proposition," said Captain Vance, "and accept of it. You shall have a fairer contest, too, than you seem to expect. Here, Dempster, Atton, Brown."

The officers addressed drew around their captain.

"Promise me," said Marston, "by all the pledges that bind our association together, that if Mr. Coe should succeed in killing me, he shall receive no injury for doing so; and further, that, upon his mere pledge of honor to keep secret what he has learned about us, you will land him at any port near to our course, at which he may wish to disembark. Promise, moreover, under the same pledges, that you will not interfere in the combat about to take place between Mr. Coe and myself by deed, word, or look."

The officers addressed, even the brutal Atton, gave the pledges required unhesitatingly, being perfectly assured that their captain would gain the victory.

"What weapons do you choose, Mr. Coe?" asked Marston.

"It is for you to choose," said John; "you have the right as the challenged party."

"I select swords, then," said Captain Marston; "the conqueror with that weapon is not obliged to injure his adversary."

"You seem to consider it as granted—by that remark," observed our hero, "that you will be successful."

"By no means," answered Marston.

John turned upon his adversary an inquiring and rather threatening look; but he said nothing more on the subject.

Lieutenant Dempster, or Seacome, was sent into the captain's cabin for a pair of small-swords.

Ada Revere had looked imploringly upon Marston and Coe alternately, while the quarrel had been growing to its present condition. Anxiety and terror were both plainly expressed in her face; she had seemed hitherto desirous of interfering, but fearful of doing so; no doubt she had learned from much experience, the danger of attempting to check Captain Marston

in any of his acts. Now the prospect of an immediate conflict seemed to rouse her to action. She threw herself upon her knees between the two foes.

"Oh! I beseech you," she cried, "let this quarrel go no further. You know, Captain Marston, why I feel an interest in you; but you do not know that this gentleman, Mr. Coe, rendered me, many years ago, one of those services which can never be forgotten. Think, gentlemen, what horror it would be to me to see one of you injured, or perhaps even killed by the other, and have pity upon me."

John Coe raised her from her kneeling position.

"I do not fully know what you mean, madam," he said, "and can not, therefore, make use of your meaning to put a stop to what is going on. But I can feel for your evident suffering without knowing its cause."

"Master Revere," said Marston, with sadness and yet something of sternness in his voice, "if I could, I would consult your feelings in this matter. But what you say comes too late, even if it were fully explained. Mr. Brown, do me the favor to lead this young gentleman to his state-room door."

Mr. Bowsprit advanced, and taking the hand of Ada led her away. She retired, still extending her disengaged hand toward the intended combatants, with an imploring glance.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SHIP DUCHESS

"She was a vision of delight."—BALLAD.

"These treasures are for you, my own beloved one—

Laid up for you by your own father's hand."—FOXGLOVE.

"ANTONIO A long, low, black and rakish vessel, say you?

PIETRO. Yes, captain; she's a pirate beyond doubt.

ANTONIO. We'll have a fight or e'er she capture us."—THE STORM.

THE truth of my history obliges me to relate some occurrences powerfully bearing upon John's fortunes.

It was in the early part of the month of June, in the year

eighteen hundred and seventeen, when the English ship *Duchess* left the port of Kingston in the island of Jamaica, bound to the port of Havre in France. She had been chartered for this voyage by a French merchant by the name of Jules Durocher.

Jules Durocher had settled, when a young man, as a planter in the island of Hayti; but, dissatisfied with a planter's life, he had sold his land in that island, and afterward removed from Hayti to Kingston in the English island of Jamaica, where he established himself as a merchant. Here he had succeeded in making a large fortune, when he was but little more than forty years of age. Having lost his wife—an English lady, whom he had married in Jamaica, and to whom he was much attached—and his health, which had for many years seemed to be good, failing at length suddenly from the insidious and slowly-working effects of the climate, he had determined to retire from business, to realize his gains, and to pass the remainder of his days in his native France, with his only child Louise. He had now so far carried out his intentions as to have converted into gold and bills of exchange all his large fortune, except the comparatively small portion which had been required to purchase a cargo of the native products of Jamaica for the ship he had chartered. So uncertain, however, are the calculations of men, that now, when the quietude in which he had long hoped to pass his declining years appeared almost certain of realization, his health began rapidly to decline; and his state was so weak, when the lading of the *Duchess* was completed, that he had to be taken from his bed on land and carried to one on board of the ship. Such was the state of things in which Jules Durocher and his daughter Louise left their home of many years in Kingston to transfer their fortunes to the father's native France.

Louise Durocher was very beautiful; but her beauty was not of the kind which we generally attribute to French ladies, and which is characterized by sparkling black eyes, raven-hued tresses and a brunette complexion. Her loveliness was a direct antithesis to this description. Her hair deserved fully the title of "golden" on account of both its color and its lustre, and, held smoothly around her head by a plain

riband, fell in a mass of rich curls over her shoulders. Her softly-bright eyes, dark, but decidedly and purely blue, exhibited in every glance a tender heart and an intelligent mind. A soft rose-tinge upon her cheeks illustrated, by a delicate contrast, the pearly fairness of her complexion.

At the time when she is introduced to my readers, she was dressed in a loose white muslin morning-robe, slightly confined at the waist by a white silken cord; and from beneath the folds of this garment peeped out now and then two beautifully-shaped little feet clad in a delicate pair of white satin slippers. The band around her hair was also white. A dress of this description does not generally comport with beauty of the style of Louise's; but in the case of loveliness so exceeding as hers, it absolutely added to the effect of her presence by detracting nothing by contrast from its spiritual character. In the pure, innocent and elevated expression of her face, haloed by her lustrous wealth of golden hair, the beholder realized the ideal of the old masters in the art of painting, when they represented upon canvas the features of female saints and angels.

The cabin of the *Duchess* occupied, as usual, the after-part of the ship. Directly at the stern, and dividing the width of the vessel between them, were two handsome and elegantly-furnished state-rooms—the one assigned to Mr. Durocher, and the other to his daughter. Each of these state-rooms opened into the saloon, which, occupying the breadth of the ship, was very nearly square. Forward of this saloon, a narrow passage leading from it divided a double row of state-rooms—two upon each side—which were used by the officers of the ship.

At the time when these new characters are introduced to the reader, the *Duchess* had been some days out of port. She had gone through what is called the Windward Passage—between the islands of Cuba and Hayti—had passed through the channel crowded with many islets, which lies between Caycos and Turks islands, and had fairly entered upon the broad Atlantic. The invigorating air of the open sea had so improved the health of Mr. Durocher that he had been brought from the bed in his state-room to a sofa in the saloon. Here he was attended by his daughter and a young quadroon slave-girl who waited upon the young lady

Louise, who was skilled in music, and performed upon several instruments, had just finished singing, to an accompaniment on the harp, the beautiful old song entitled "My Normandy"—a genuine relic of the age of chivalry, of the days of the trouviers and troubadours—when her father's emotion caused her to put aside the instrument. That touching song, applying fully to the case of the returning exile himself, with its tender refrain:

" I long again the land to see,
Which gave me birth—my Normandy,"

recalled the past vividly, with many a hope then entertained of a happy return to his native land—many a hope which the untimely death of his wife had destroyed forever.

" Dear Louise," said Mr. Durocher, " how feelingly you sing that charming song of my native land ! What happiness I used to anticipate in pointing out to your now sainted mother—when wealth, achieved through a long and tedious exile, should enable me to resume, in my Normandy, the station from which losses had reduced my family—all the beautiful scenes so familiar to my childhood. God destroys such hopes to draw our affections away from the things of earth. 'Tis now for you only, my beloved child, that I at all consider a worldly future. You will have wealth ; few of the daughters of France born upon the soil will be heirs to such a fortune. But there are cares also belonging to the possession of riches ; and how will an inexperienced young girl like you know how to meet these ?"

" Do not trouble yourself about me, my dear father," said the affectionate daughter. " Is not your health improving ? Every day since we left Kingston you have gained strength. You will live yourself to see your money safely invested and your daughter's future secured. Let us hope that many, many happy years on earth await us."

" If future years are in store for me, Louise," replied Mr. Durocher, " they may be cheerful, when blessed by your presence ; but I can not be happy where your mother is not. I feel convinced, however, that I shall soon meet her again ; I am impressed with a feeling—I know not why—that I shall never more see France."

The young lady left her seat beside the harp and sat upon

a chair near to the sofa on which her father was reclining. She placed an arm around his neck, and took in her disengaged hand one of his.

"Dearest father," she said, in a tender and soothing tone of voice, "these low spirits are but the lingering effects of disease. Life must still have much happiness in store for you. The grand and beautiful scenes of day and night, upon land and water—exhibiting, as they ever do, a proof of the power and goodness and love of God toward His creatures—must have an influence leading to happiness upon every human soul. I am sure that one so good as you must feel this blessed influence."

"I do feel it, my dear child," said the invalid; "but that feeling can not remove the uneasiness which I experience at the conviction that I must soon leave you alone in the world. I have a number of relations in France; but you are unknown to all of them; even I—so long has it been since I have met any of them—must be nearly, if not quite, forgotten."

The speaker paused awhile in reflection. Louise was also silent; she could make no reply to her father's last observation; its probable truth admitted of no just objection. Mr. Durocher at length spoke again:

"Louise," he said, taking a pocket-book from an inside breast-pocket of his coat, "in this pocket-book are bills of exchange on different bankers in France to the amount of twelve hundred thousand francs. Even if these be lost, the money will still be safe; the bills are executed in triplicate; one copy of each has been left by me in the hands of a friend at Kingston, and the third copy of each has been sent to a gentleman in Havre. These bills can only be paid on my endorsement, or on that of my legal representative, in case of my death. Here is a note of the names of these gentlemen and of a list of the drafts in my trunk; here is a copy of the same note which I wish you to take possession of. In the strong-box in my state-room are fifty thousand francs in gold; and the cargo of this ship should sell at Havre for at least a hundred and fifty thousand francs. In the event of my death, this property is yours. I should have mentioned to you these particulars before; I feel urged now to postpone no longer giving you this information."

At this instant, and before Louise could make a reply, a loud voice giving orders and the noise of hurrying feet were heard upon deck.

"Celeste," said Mr. Durocher, addressing the quadroon girl, "go upon deck and see if you can learn what is the matter."

The girl hurried up the cabin steps, as ordered, and soon returned accompanied by the captain.

"What is the cause of the disturbance overhead, Captain Johnson?" asked the invalid.

"We have been apparently pursued for some hours," was the answer, "by a rather suspicious-looking vessel. Pirates are by no means uncommon in these waters, and it is not improbable that this is one. As the wind is light, we have crowded on every yard of canvas. The stranger, nevertheless, is evidently gaining upon us. I have, therefore, ordered our two twelve-pounders to be made ready for service, and have directed the men also to look to their small-arms. If it were late in the day we might indulge a hope of keeping at a sufficient distance from the suspicious craft to make our escape in the night."

The time was between nine and ten o'clock in the morning.

The face of Louise became white with alarm. The poor girl seemed to be terribly frightened.

"There is no need of feeling alarmed, Miss Durocher," said the captain, in a cheerful voice. "We are not by any means certain the stranger is a pirate. Should he prove to be such, the probabilities are in our favor that he will not molest us when he finds, on nearer approach, that we are so strong; these sea-robbers are not apt to assault any vessel which they can not capture without fighting. We are well manned, having sixteen officers and seamen, all able men. We have two cannons and a plenty of muskets and cutlasses, besides a full supply of ammunition. Even if he should attack us, I think that we can easily beat him off. My vessel is larger than his, and maneuvers well; and fully one-half of us are man-of-war's men."

"Why do you suppose," asked Mr. Durocher, "that the stranger is in pursuit of you?"

"Because," replied Captain Johnson, "when we first saw

him, the course which he was steering was due southeast, as ours is northeast, and he is now directly astern of us. If Miss Durocher will come with me upon deck, she can see our pursuer very plainly by aid of the telescope. You are too weak, I suppose, to get upon deck yourself, Mr. Durocher?"

"I will try to do so, if you will give me your aid," answered the invalid.

"You had better not undertake so much," said Louise. "I am afraid that the fatigue will do you harm."

"It will not hurt him at all, miss," said Captain Johnson, cheerily. "He need not suffer from fatigue at all. If you will let that yellow girl of yours bring up an easy chair, I will carry your father up in my arms."

Captain Johnson was, indeed, a powerfully-made man; he was fully six feet in height, and stout in proportion. Much exercise in the open air had given to him the full vigor to which his herculean frame seemed to entitle him.

As soon as the invalid was made comfortable in his easy chair, and was in a position from which he commanded a view of the ocean all around, the spy-glass was handed to him. Far away toward the southwest, and at first sight rather low upon the horizon, the strange sail could be seen by the unassisted eye; but the telescope showed that her hull was above the horizon.

"There seem to be a number of men upon her deck," said Mr. Durocher; "and she has one of those long pivot-guns amidships. That is a very dangerous cannon, Captain Johnson; our pursuer may, with a gun of so long a range, do us ruinous injury without coming near enough to allow us to do him harm with our small cannon."

The telescope was passed to the captain, and by him to Louise. It was then handed to the officers of the ship.

"Can you make out her hull?" asked the captain of one of these officers, who had at the moment the glass in his hand.

"Partly," was the answer. "What I can see of it is entirely black. She seems to be clipper-built."

"And these Baltimore clippers are so fleet," remarked the captain.

Things began to look dark for those on board of the ship, must be confessed; if the stranger's intentions were hostile,

his superior speed, and the long range of his pivot-gun, made the escape of the chase very doubtful. Captain Johnson, however, like a good officer, made every preparation for defense. His self-possessed and even cheerful manner, inspired those under his command with confidence. But Louise became very pale, and Mr. Durocher suffered much in mind, principally upon her account; but, for the sake of each other, their fears were kept to themselves. The quadroon girl shivered with terror, on her own account, and on account of those to whom she was much attached by the habit of years.

CHAPTER IX

THE COMBAT.

"The foe, invulnerable still,
Foiled his wild rage by steady skill,
Till, at advantage ta'en, his brand
Forced Roderick's weapon from his hand."—LADY OF THE LAKE

"ORANO. We offer you the post of captain, sir.

ORTEGA. I accept—with conditions."—THE ONSLAUGHT.

"A pirate ship, and a pirate crew."—OLD SONG.

THE swords were brought. A clear space was left upon the deck for the combatants to move in, around which the sailors—first those who had stood near to the quarter-deck, and afterwards, those from the more forward parts of the vessel—formed a ring; all were eager and intensely interested, but quiet spectators. Seeing the officers offering no interference, they no doubt considered that it was also their part to make no interruption. Mr. Dempster acted as second to Marston; Mr. Brown, better known as Bowsprit, acted as second to John Coe.

The swords were measured by the seconds and found of equal length. As both the weapons belonged to Captain Marston, the choice of them was offered to the prisoner, who took one of them at once, apparently without making any selection. The combatants were then placed in position; the salutes with the blades were given, and the fight began.

It was very soon apparent that young Coe was the more expert swordsman. Captain Marston had, when very young—as most young gentlemen of fortune were in the habit of doing at that period—taken lessons in the small-sword exercise; but he had of late been accustomed only occasionally to combats with the cutlass; and such conflicts—as even one who is not an expert at either weapon must know—must rather tend to diminish than increase one's skill with the small sword. His antagonist, on the contrary, had been in the habit for years of practicing play with foils with two young gentlemen of his neighborhood; so that he had much improved his skill in that respect during the three years which had passed since the close of the war with Great Britain, in which he had borne an honorable part.

The sword-points were scarcely crossed before John was aware that his adversary's life was in his hands. This discovery was a great relief to his mind. He placed no faith in the pledges given by Captain Marston's officers; on the contrary, he felt assured that, if he should kill one who had virtually acknowledged himself to be a pirate-chief, his own life would be forfeited; even if the officers should keep their pledges to the letter, the common sailors were bound by no pledge. These reflections caused him to give all of his efforts to the disarming of his adversary; added to these considerations inducing him to pursue such a course, was the memory of early and innocent association, and also the seeming generosity of his foe in granting him at all a combat, as equal almost as it could be made under the circumstances.

Captain Marston, too, became very soon aware that he was fighting against one who was superior in the use of the weapon which he had selected. Shaken from his usual self-possession by a knowledge of this fact, and irritated by the forbearance of one whom he had considered his inferior with any weapon, and especially with the one which he had chosen, he made the mistake usual in such cases,

“And showered his blows like wintry rain.”

John Coe, on the contrary, kept perfect control of his faculties. For an instant he retreated rapidly before the violent assault of his adversary; but, the next moment, with a short, sudden and powerful blow of his sword, he sent Captain

Marston's weapon flying over his own head. His own sword-point was immediately at the Captain's breast.

There was a sensation among the spectators at this sudden and totally unexpected result of the combat; but there was no movement towards any interference.

Captain Marston's arms dropped by his side. He stood squarely before his antagonist, as if ready to receive his sword-thrust. Coe stood, meanwhile, with his sword fixed, as it were, in the same position, while he kept his eyes firmly bent upon those of his conquered adversary.

"I am at your mercy, Mr. Coe," said Captain Marston, at length in a voice that palpitated—if I may use the term—partly on account of his recent violent exertion, and partly because of surprise at his defeat.

"I wish you no harm," answered the victor, lowering his sword-point. "I only wished to show that had I been assailed by open force, I should not have been easily made a prisoner."

The expression of the faces of the lookers-on showed that their captive had risen very highly in their estimation within the last few minutes. The most brutal and debased human being in the world still admires manly courage and magnanimity. The determined bearing of the prisoner, indicating a perfect preservation of his self-respect and self-reliance under such adverse circumstances, his willingness, even eagerness to prove his manhood by fighting Captain Marston in the very presence of his band, and the coolness, skill, and self-control which he had exhibited in winning and in using his victory—all manifested those qualities which men most admire in men. Captain Marston saw the admiration of his prisoner which was expressed in the faces of his officers and men; and he immediately resorted to an expedient which, by exhibiting on his part a generosity apparently equal, but in fact more than equal, to that of his adversary, might neutralize to some extent the injury which may have been done to his standing in the opinions of his band by the result of the contest.

"You see, gentlemen," he said, addressing his ship's company, "that in the opinion which I have heretofore expressed to you of my friendly foe, I have not over-rated his merits. Let us have three hearty cheers for John Alvan Coe."

The three cheers called for were immediately given with a will.

"I further propose, gentlemen," said Captain Marston, "that we proceed forthwith to form the corps of marines which I have before spoken of to you, and that Mr. Coe be offered the captaincy of that band."

"And with all due deference to Captain Vance," exclaimed Afton, before Captain Marston's proposition could be acted upon, and with his usual intermingling of expletives, "I propose that we either make Mr. Coe commander of this brig or throw him overboard. For my part I should prefer to have the latter alternative carried out. No divided command can exist except to our disadvantage. If Mr. Coe is in your opinion superior to Captain Vance, make him our chief; but do not give to him a charge which, unless he and the captain entirely agree, may cause civil war on board of the brig."

"I beg to differ with my honored friend, Lieutenant Afton," said Bowsprit, facing the ship's company. "As Mr. Coe has proved himself a brave and skillful man, we should try to secure him as a co-partner in our enterprises. As he is a born and bred gentleman, there are co-gent reasons why he should hold a respectable position among us. But although he has shown that he is superior to Captain Vance in the use of the small-sword, we are not therefore to suppose that he is co-equal with our distinguished chief in experience in seamanship and in habits of command. Nor would our new friend rank, in the position proposed, with our captain; he would be co-ordinate in rank with Lieutenant Seacome. There would be no danger of a conflict of authority with Captain Vance; there is a commander of marines on board of every man-of-war. I can not, therefore, agree with either of the propositions of my distinguished friend Afton. His first would be unjust to our captain, his second would be an equal wrong to the gallant newcomer. I second Captain Vance's motion."

The speech of Billy Bowsprit was received with much applause, and the proposition of the captain was adopted by a vote of two to one. Mr. Afton had his admirers among those old salts who were, like himself, rough in language and especially hardened in crime. These men were not influenced

in their votes by the authority of the captain or the eloquence of Billy Bowsprit.

"And now, Mr. Coe," said the captain, "will you do me the honor of accepting the post to which we have elected you, and give me the pleasure of being the first to name you by your new title, Captain Coe, of the marine force?"

Young Coe remembered the conversations upon this very subject which he had held, in anticipation, with Ada Revere, and her advice as to the course which he should pursue, should the offer be made to him. He called to mind also that, immediately precedent to his duel with Captain Marston, she had declared that she was indebted to himself for an important service. He knew that that unfortunate girl must be better qualified by experience than he was himself, to guide his course in relation to this matter. He determined, therefore, that he would consult with her again, and, should he find her sincere in her friendly feelings toward him, to be governed by her counsel in the desperate strait in which he was placed. With this purpose in view he made answer to Captain Marston's question:

"Your offer, Captain Vance, and gentlemen," he said, addressing the officers and seamen, and for the first time giving the captain of the brig his assumed name, "so changes the relation which I bore toward you but a few moments ago, that I must beg of you to grant me a little time to consider this question so suddenly placed before me. With your permission, I will retire for a few moments, and then return and give you my decision. In any case, I thank you for the favor you have shown to me."

Thus having spoken, on deck, he retired to the cabin. In the saloon he found Ada Revere. She sat upon a sofa with an elbow upon one of its arms, and her head leaning upon her hand. On the entrance of our hero she rose at once to meet him, and her face, which had been sad, expressed a sense of relief.

"Oh! I am so glad to see you, Mr. Coe," she said. "Your face seems to show that nothing unpleasant has resulted from the state of things in which I left you. Tell me—do tell me quickly—what has happened?"

John related to her all that had occurred.

"And now, Miss Revere," he added, "I have come to ask an explanation of your language when you spoke a while ago of being under obligation to me. When I saw you at the old manor-house, your face seemed familiar to me. I thought that that recognition was accounted for by my having seen you in your boy's dress, at the Spout on St. Leonard's Creek. But you seemed a while ago to refer to an acquaintance between us dating farther into the past."

"I can see nothing wrong, Mr. Coe," answered the beautiful girl, "in telling you—in outline, at least—all my history. Do you remember Ada Ashleigh, who was one of your school-mates at the old Manor-Quarter school-house situated between Millmont and Drum Point?"

"Certainly I do," was the answer. "What a sweet and guileless little girl she was!"

"I was that little girl, Mr. Coe," said Ada. "Do you not remember that, when any of the school-children charged me with being the daughter of a man who received smuggled goods, after my father was brought before a court in Baltimore on such a charge, you always took my part? And once—an occasion which I shall never forget—when Mr. Dempster, now an officer on board of this brig, but then a boy almost a year older than yourself, wounded my feelings even to weeping, by his jeers, you rebuked him so severely for being rude, as you said, to a harmless little girl, that he challenged you to a fight. I shall never forget the gratitude which I felt toward you for championing my cause, and my delight when you handled Dempster so roughly, that he was obliged to acknowledge himself beaten, and to promise never to say a harsh word to me again."

"We had heard in Calvert," said John Alvan, "that Ada Ashleigh had made a runaway marriage in Baltimore, for which she was disinherited by her father. Since that intelligence was received, two or three years ago, I have heard nothing of her fate."

"That runaway marriage was between me and Harry Marston," said Ada. "He intended it for a false marriage, and when he told me that it was such, I believed his words. But I learned nearly a year ago now, from the friend of Captain Marston, whom he engaged to procure the services

of some one, not a minister of the gospel, to perform the ceremony, that we had actually been wedded by a regular priest, and I have since obtained from that priest a certificate of the marriage. The conscience of Henry Marston's friend would not, at the last, allow him to take part in such deceit. My father never knew that it was with Captain Marston I had left his house; nor have I yet been able to summon the necessary courage to inform Captain Marston that we are really married. I wish that he knew it. I am sure that, had he been acquainted with the fact, he would never have commissioned me, his own wife, to act the part which he meant that I should act during your imprisonment at the old manor-house and at the hut."

"I would tell him for you myself, unhesitatingly," remarked John Alvan, "but the information would come most properly from you."

After some further conversation ensued upon the subject, young Coe asked,

"Do you still advise me, madam, to accept this position which is offered to me? I do not mean absolutely to accept it, but to *seem* to accept it. I know now that you are really my friend, and have full faith in you."

"I certainly do," answered the lady. "Your refusal to do so must eventuate in your death. They have gone too far to set you at freedom, even under the most solemn pledges. As the most of these men would not be faithful to any pledge made to you, so they would not trust in any pledges made by you to them, under the circumstances. Whereas, by seeming to accept the offer, you will, in the ordinary course of things, have many chances of making your escape."

"Yet," remarked the young man, "if they were to undertake, for instance, to capture a merchant-vessel, I would die rather than give assistance in the commission of such a crime."

"Of course," answered Ada, "but the 'chapter of accidents' may make unnecessary your placing yourself in antagonism to the brig's crew on that question."

"Have they ever really made such captures?" asked young Coe.

"Many such," replied Ada. "They are pirates in the full meaning of the word."

"In this business they must have committed murders," said John.

"There is not a man in the brig, except yourself," answered Ada, "who is not responsible for the shedding of human blood."

"Dear madam," said John, pityingly, "what a terrible life you must have led among such men."

"I have often been able to save bloodshed," said Ada. "Most of the captures made by the *Falcon* have been made without the taking of human life. When life has been taken, it has been mostly in cases where a fight has followed a refusal on the part of a merchant vessel to surrender. I have never known a case where Captain Marston has allowed any one to be hurt after surrender. Indeed, I think at heart he is sick of the business in which he is engaged. Afton, however, and too many of the crew with him, appear to take pleasure in acts of cruelty."

The conversation between Mrs. Marston and young Coe here closed, and the latter returned upon deck. He expressed to the captain and the ship's company his acceptance provisionally of the post offered to him, it being understood that he reserved to himself the right to resign it whenever he thought proper to do so.

Mr. Afton loudly pronounced his maledictions against such "half-way" courses; and there were at first some dark scowls seen among the men.

"I welcome you into our gallant service, Captain Coe," said Captain Marston, with much cordiality in his manner, "and am sure that no one member could be a greater addition to our company. As to the terms which Captain Coe makes," continued the pirate chief, addressing the men, "no one can object to them; any man has the right to resign at any time any office which he holds among us. The main thing is that Captain Coe is now a member of our band, and we all know how forcibly in an instance of this kind applies the old adage, 'In for a penny, in for a pound!' Shipmates, welcome our new comrade."

These remarks of Captain Marston, intended to counteract what had been said by Afton, and to satisfy the crew with regard to the reservation made by Coe, were well-timed, and their new comrade was welcomed with loud cheers.

The company of marines was at once formed, and "Captain" Coe, as they called him, immediately commenced the performance of his new office by taking his men through such a preparatory drill as the short remaining time of daylight would allow. It was his determination to make himself as popular as he could among those who were placed under his command, with the view of using his influence for such good purposes as might hereafter present themselves. He was eminently successful in his endeavors to obtain popularity; his men already entertaining great admiration of his courage and resolute demeanor.

The *Sea-bird* continued for some days to run a southerly course, impelled by a moderate breeze from the west. Her prow was then turned toward the southeast; it being the intention of Captain Marston to get into the track of vessels trading between the West Indies and the Spanish Main and the different European ports. While on this course certain changes were made in the appearance of the brig. The white stripe along her bends, just below the guards, was covered with a strip of black canvas; like strips, on which were painted the words *The Falcon*, were placed on each of her bows, and on her stern, over the name *The Sea-bird*; and the carved image of one bird was substituted for that of another as her figure-head. Other alterations were made in her rigging and elsewhere, so that the vessel's appearance was almost entirely changed.

CHAPTER X.

THE CHASE.

"The western breeze is fresh and free;
Before its power the vessels fleet,
And, bounding o'er the flashing waves,
Like lovers hasty to meet."—YSOBEL—A BALLAD.

"And sweep through the deep,
While the stormy tempests blow;
While the battle rages loud and long,
And the stormy tempests blow."—MARINERS OF ENGLAND.

"By each gun a lighted brand,
In a bold, determined hand."—BATTLE OF THE BALTIC.

DAY after day the wind continued to blow mildly from the west, and the brig still made regular but slow progress before it, on her southeastwardly course.

One morning, before sunrise, a strange sail was espied upon the larboard bow. It was during Mr. Aston's watch that this discovery was made. The second-lieutenant pronounced the stranger to be an English merchant ship. This fact, with the opinion of the officer of the watch, being communicated to the commander of the brig—who was still in his hammock, and whom we must now call Captain Vance—orders were given by him to crowd all sail on the *Falcon*, and to pursue the stranger ship.

Hour after hour passed away, and still the pirate vessel continued to gain on the chase, which had in the meanwhile, been discovered to be a large and heavily-laden ship—to all appearance of English nationality.

"I am glad," said Captain Vance to his officers, all of whom, with himself, had come upon deck soon after learning that a strange sail was in sight, "that the chase is a British vessel. I have always looked upon the British as our natural enemies."

"So do I," replied Lieutenant Seacome. "Whenever we chase or capture a British vessel, I feel as if still on board of

a privateer, pursuing a regular warfare under the legitimate authority of letters of marque and reprisal."

Mile after mile the brig gained upon the chase while the wind lasted; but toward two o'clock the light breeze, which had been blowing from the same point so many days, began to die away, and by noon there was an absolute calm. The brig was at this time still many miles distant from the ship. For more than hour each vessel remained—except as affected by that unceasing swell (in this instance scarcely perceptible) which never allows the water to be perfectly tranquil—as motionless as—

"A painted ship
Upon a painted ocean."

Between one and two o'clock, clouds, in masses at first comparatively light, but which grew dense and denser, began to move overhead from the east toward the west; these were evidently impelled by a wind traveling in the same direction, and light flaws of which occasionally made faint shadows over the ocean by slightly stirring its waters, and sometimes gave a soft pulsation to the sails of the two vessels.

Shortly after two o'clock, lightning flashes gleamed in rather quick succession, from below the eastern horizon; but no thunder was heard. At length a small portion of densely black cloud showed itself in the same direction, above the line dividing the ocean and sky. This cloud rapidly arose, spreading itself as it ascended, while flashes of lightning, followed, after fast-diminishing intervals, by grand and grander thunderbursts, flamed forth more and more frequently, from the dark and threatening mass of vapor.

Soon blasts of wind, heavily laden with moisture, and each more powerful than that which preceded it, came with rapidly decreasing lulls, from the west, until the breeze, having at length become continuous, had grown almost to a storm. Both vessels had prepared for this increased force of the wind by shortening sail. The chase, however, urged by the necessity of escaping as well from the brig which pursued her as from the storm, still carried all the canvas which she could bear under the heavy pressure of the wind, almost directly before which both vessels were now steering an east-north-east course. Still the brig—built after the Baltimore clipper

model, so famed for fleetness—continued to gain rapidly upon the ship.

“Suppose, captain,” said Aston, addressing Marston, “we range the ‘Long Tom’ to bear upon her, and give her a shot?”

“There is no chance for hitting her,” answered the captain, “with the brig beginning to pitch in the way she is now; it will be but waste of powder. Besides, the distance is too great.”

“If we wait,” objected the second-lieutenant (so-called) “until we get within range of her two cannon, she will have the advantage of us in the number of her guns. If we fire at her from a distance, on the contrary, her cannon will be of no use to her.”

The intelligent reader, of course, already understands that the ship pursued was the *Duchess*, which, with her passengers and captain, was introduced to his attention in a previous chapter.

“In the present condition of the weather,” replied the captain to the objections of his second officer, “we shall have to lose the advantage of the longer range of our gun, or lose our hoped-for prize. At the rate at which we are now gaining on her, it will be nearly sunset when we overtake her. The sky is already darkened by clouds, and if the rain—which is threatening to fall every moment—should continue into the night, we may lose sight of her altogether, and she may make her escape in the darkness. If she offers to resist, therefore, we shall have to fight at close quarters.

“I hope that she may be worth the trouble she is likely to give us,” muttered Aston, with his usual maledictions.

“And I hope, Aston,” retorted the captain, with a jesting smile, “that you have no intention of getting nervous about the matter.”

“A pretty time of day,” rejoined Aston, “for anybody to be doubting my courage. You know well enough that I was only wishing that we should make a good haul in capturing her.”

“We can not tell what she is worth,” said the captain, “until we get on board of her. This we know—that she is a large ship and appears to be well laden. Others might

give up the hope of capturing her on account of the state of the weather; I never give up what I undertake."

"It is very evident," said Lieutenant Seacome, "from the manner in which she is handled, that the man who has charge of her is a thorough seaman."

"Yes," assented the captain. "And there is something about the man's movements, as I note him through the telescope, which convinces me that he will make a fight of it before he yields. Captain Coe, you must see to it that your men are ready with all their side-arms. They evidently have men enough to manage both their cannons; and they will, therefore, have the advantage of us, unless we board them, or lay so closely alongside of them, that our small-arms will 'tell.' I am determined to board, however, if it be possible to do so in such a sea."

"My men are prepared to act at a minute's notice," said the Captain of Marines.

Young Coe had made much progress, in the last few days, in perfecting his men in their drill. He had already gained their confidence in his capacity for command, his courage and skill, and his possession of all his faculties in moments of danger. Notwithstanding the language in which he had so promptly answered Captain Vance's (as we must call him now) inquiry, he entertained not the slightest intention of taking any part in the commission of crime; he was determined, on the contrary, to use his influence with his men to prevent it. For the manner in which he should carry out this latter determination, he intended to trust to contingencies.

On board the pirate brig every preparation was made for a conflict. In the mean time the hours advanced, and at length the two vessels were within short cannon range of each other. It still wanted more than an hour to sunset; and, notwithstanding the dense clouds which still covered the sky, (the rain which had fallen heavily for a while, had soon ceased), the daylight was still clear enough to distinguish objects on board of one ship from the other, whenever the upheaving and subsidence of the waves allowed the deck of the lower to be seen from that of the higher.

As the brig overhauled the chase, Captain Vance directed

his helmsman to steer to the larboard of the chase, on a line as near as it was safe to approach her; by this course he would not only take the weather-gage of the ship, but would also make his position more convenient to "speak" her.

"Mr. Bowsprit," said the captain to the officer who had charge of the cannon, "fire a shot across her bows. That is the best way to open the conversation."

The shot was immediately fired; and the reverberation was deafening, in the damp, heavy atmosphere.

The vessels were now not more than a hundred yards apart; so near were they to each other, that the shadow of the brig—the outlines of which were defined clearly by the light which came from the western sky, where the clouds were somewhat broken—fell almost aboard of the ship.

The shot brought immediately a hail from the deck of the *Duchess*.

"Brig ahoy!" came through a speaking-trumpet in stentorian tones from Captain Johnson.

"Ay, ay," was the answer.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" was the retort from the deck of the ship.

"The *Falcon*, free rover," replied Captain Vance, "and we want you to surrender."

"We are free-born Britons," answered Captain Johnson, "and will never surrender to pirates."

"If you surrender without resistance, we will spare the lives of all on board," said the captain of the *Falcon*.

"I would rather sink the ship," replied the captain of the *Duchess*.

"Woe be to you then," exclaimed Captain Vance. "Your blood and that of those under your control be upon your own head."

All this conversation between the vessels had been carried on through speaking-trumpets.

"Mr. Seacome," said Captain Vance to his first lieutenant, "display the flag."

The pirate flag of those days, having a black ground with white skull and cross-bones displayed upon it, was immediately run up to the mainmast-head of the brig.

The gale still continued to blow with great force, and the

waves were running higher and higher. Though I have said that the vessels were about a hundred yards apart, it is not to be supposed that there was any regularity in the distance between them. Now one vessel would be far below, then far above the other, as she sank into the "trough" of a sea, or rose upon the crest of a wave. Now the surging waters would drive them farther apart, and now closer together. Meanwhile, near and far over the sea, the fiercely-laboring winds and billows loudly roared in wild unison their stern and complaining songs. Those high and wailing voices ceaselessly mingled with, and at times rose above, all other sounds.

"Had we not better, captain," asked Seacome, "keep as near as we can to the ship until this gale has fallen, and then make the assault? We could scarcely board in such a wind as this, even should she surrender."

John Coe wished sincerely that this proposition should be adopted. Only in case of boarding the ship could he hope to carry out his plans; and it did not seem to him possible that boarding could be done in such a state of the weather. Should muskets be used, while the vessels were thus running side by side, his men—acting under his orders, too—would, like the rest of the pirate brig's crew, do all the danger they could to those on board of the ship; and he would have no means of preventing them.

"It is not the wind that is in our way," answered Captain Vance to Mr. Seacome, "so much as the waves; and seas will run higher and higher while this gale continues. Our best chance is now. Mr. Bowsprit," he exclaimed, turning to that officer, "have you reloaded your gun?"

"Ay, ay, sir," was the answer.

"Then fire into them," said the captain, "and do them all the damage you can."

The "Long Tom" again pealed a savage note. But the only damage done to the *Duchess* was a small hole made through one of her sails.

The shot was immediately returned; it was fired by Captain Johnson's own hand. The ball passed through the guards and swept across the deck of the *Falcon*, killing one man and wounding two more by the splinters which it tore

from the timbers through which it had forced its way. The loud peal of the cannon had not died away, when another shot from the *Duchess* came almost upon its track, again killing one and wounding two more.

"This will never do, Mr. Bowsprit," said Captain Vance. "Is your gun loaded again?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply.

"Let me manage her this time," said the captain.

His shot was well aimed; it struck the guards of the *Duchess*, scattering the splinters far and wide.

"I'll guarantee that did them some damage," remarked Captain Vance.

Scarcely had he spoken, when two cannon-shots came in quick succession from the *Duchess*. The one struck the deck of the *Falcon*, tearing up the splinters; the other again struck the guards, scattering fragments of timber. One sailor was killed directly beside Captain Vance; three others were slightly wounded.

"Furies!" exclaimed the pirate chief, "that fellow knows his business. But this will never do. Give them a volley of musketry."

The loud roar of the "Long Tom," and the rattling peal of the muskets immediately blended into one tremendous sound. That sound was instantly echoed from on board of the ship; two cannon-shots and a dozen musket-loads again poured devastation upon the deck of the brig.

"We must come to close quarters," exclaimed the pirate chief: "we are fast losing the advantage of superior numbers. The terrible skill of that devil with his cannon is destroying our superiority in that respect. Give me a loaded musket."

He waited until a partial lifting of the smoke-cloud gave him a glimpse of the stout, manly figure of Captain Johnson, then, in an instant, taking aim, he fired. The ceaseless motion of the vessels destroyed the effect of his aim; and the man who was fired at escaped unharmed.

"Pistols and cutlasses!" exclaimed Vance, much excited. "Prepare to board. Forward with your men, Captain Coe. Helmsman, put us alongside of that vessel at once."

"That's the way to talk," said Afton. "We'll give the whelps no mercy now."

"We may sink both vessels by collision," said Seacome, "in such a sea as this."

"Then let them sink," cried the pirate chief, all of whose evil passions were now aroused. "Lay us aboard quickly, helmsman."

The helmsman did his work skillfully; the starboard bow of the brig was brought to bear gradually toward the larboard bow of the ship; and the two vessels approached each other in such a manner that their sides when they touched formed at the point of contact, a very acute angle. The guards of the ship were some above those of the brig; yet grappling-irons were cast from the latter and the vessels were made fast together. But the independent rolling and pitching of each of them, which caused them sometimes to "yaw" asunder, sometimes to come together with a crash that sounded like thunder, made the passage from one to the other very dangerous.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BOARDING ATTACK.

"Together they came with a crashing and rending,
While the sounds of the battle and tempest were blending."

—THE LOST SHIP.

"We will be true to you, most noble sir."—AVATOR.

"Oh, spare my daughter! Take my wealth—I care not;
But spare my daughter.—OLD PLAY.

"Villain, forbear!

Throw down your arms—surrender."—THE ASSAULT.

THE last fire from the *Falcon* had made sad havoc among the crew of the English vessel; two men were killed and three badly wounded by it. Hence it was that, when the pirates were thronging the brig's side, preparing to spring on board of the ship, Captain Johnson had but nine men to aid him in resisting the assault, the tenth being at the wheel. The odds were fearfully against him, being more than three to one; the pirate chief, leaving ten men to take care of the brig, had still thirty-one men, besides those who had been placed *hors de combat*, with whom to board the ship.

While John Coe was standing by the starboard guards of the brig, prepared to spring on board of the ship, with every nerve wrought up to its highest tension, he ejaculated prayers to the Almighty to guard him from sin and guide him to goodness in this terrible crisis of his fate. Just as the vessels were coming together, he felt his arm touched, and, turning, saw Ada by his side.

“For heaven’s sake, madam,” he said, in low but earnest tones, “what are you doing here? Do go into the cabin and seek out its safest corner. You are almost certain to lose your life here. This is no place for a helpless woman.”

“How can I stay there,” she said, “while these horrible scenes are taking place? I am inured to danger, and put no value on my life. Besides, I feel impelled by a power within me, and which I can not resist, to take part in the scenes about to occur on board of that ship. I put myself by your side, both because my husband would drive me away from his, and because, of all who are about to board that vessel, you alone have no evil in your heart, but are seeking to prevent it; and I wish to aid you in that good work. See! I also am armed.”

She showed a cutlass in her hand, and pointed to two double-barreled pistols in a belt around her waist.

“Keep closely by my side, then,” said John, seeing her determination. “I will do all that I can to protect you.”

“Thank you,” she replied.

John turned toward his other side; there, near to him, stood Billy Bowsprit.

“Bowsprit,” he said, in a low voice, “keep near to me; and do not forget your pledge to give all the aid in your power to prevent, to such extent as we can, the shedding of innocent blood.”

“Mr. Coe,” answered Billy, earnestly and emphatically, yet in a whisper, “I am with you, heart and hand; I am yours in life and death.”

“And see, too,” said Coe, in the same low tones, “that the five men of my band, who are with us, keep near to us, and that you and they follow me wherever I go.”

“They are here, sir,” whispered Billy, “just behind you

and me. Every man of them can be relied on ; they are **all** devoted to you."

"And you and they," replied John, still in the same undertones, "may depend upon my fulfilling my promise, should I escape with life and freedom from the perils of this night."

Thus the thirty men of the *Falcon's* crew detailed for the boarding-party, stood by the guards of the brig upon that side of her toward the ship, waiting for the moment when the upheaving and subsidence of the waters should uplift the former and depress the latter, that they might seize the opportunity to leap down upon the deck of the *Duchess*.

Captain Johnson was also waiting for the same moment. He had stationed eight men, each with a cutlass in his right hand and a pistol in his left, in a position to meet the pirates should they gain his deck. He had so carefully balanced and trained his two guns that, when they should be fired, the balls would come together at a short distance from the muzzles of the cannons. By one of these guns stood Captain Johnson himself, by the other one of his mates, upon whose coolness he could thoroughly depend. Each of these two resolute men held a lighted match in his hand.

By this time the sun had been half an hour below the horizon, and the short twilight of that southern latitude was fast darkening into a night of storm and of unusual gloom ; for, although there was one clear spot in the western sky, all the rest of the face of heaven was veiled in heavy clouds.

In his anxiety to gain, as soon as possible, the deck of the ship, Captain Vance had not noted all the dispositions made on board of the *Duchess* ; his attention had been given mainly to the ordering of his own men, and to the eight men arranged for the reception of his assaulting party.

The critical moment, upon the results of which so much of vital importance to the combatants depended, arrived. The brig rose high upon the summit of a huge billow, while the merchant-ship descended into the valley between that and another monster wave. At that instant the pirates sprung toward the deck of the *Duchess* ; the eight men of the latter, who had been placed to meet this assault, fired their pistols, and Captain Johnson and his mate applied the matches to **the cannon.**

Three of the pirates fell upon the ship's deck, two killed and one mortally wounded by the pistol-shots of their enemies; five made the leap too late, of whom two were crushed between the vessels and fell into the sea, and three struck against the guards of the now rising ship, and were thrown back with violence upon their own deck. Captain Vance himself received a pistol-shot through the brain, at the moment when he was about to spring from the guards of the *Falcon* to the deck of the *Duchess*; he disappeared between the two vessels and sunk into the sea.

John Coe—to avoid confronting the eight defenders of the ship—had taken his station with Ada, Billy Bowsprit, and the rest of the small party devoted to him, on the extreme left of the boarding-line of pirates. The next officer on his right was lieutenant Aston, who was separated from him, however, by several men. At the extreme right of the whole line had been Captain Vance, Lieutenant Seacome being left in charge of the brig.

Thus, when young Coe, holding Ada by the hand, alighted on the deck of the *Duchess*, he found the second-lieutenant of the *Falcon*—with a party of five men under his immediate command—between himself and the defenders of the ship. He saw the wretch, Aston, ever intent upon spoil—after making, with all the assaulting-party to his right, a rush against the ship's crew which forced the latter to give back a space—detach himself, with four men, from the rest of the pirates, and, crossing the deck, hurry along the starboard side of the ship toward the entrance to the cabin.

It had been the first intention of Coe to throw himself, with his small force, between the contending parties, and to insist upon the pirates' retiring to the brig; or, in case of their refusal to do so, to take sides against them in the fight. But, seeing that the odds against the ship's crew was now not so great, Captain Johnson and his mate having joined them, he determined, with his followers, to pursue Aston, and to prevent such mischief as he might be bent upon.

Captain Johnson, when he saw so many of the pirate crew hastening toward the cabin, was also anxious to follow them; but he was too hard-pressed by his enemies to allow him to do so. He hoped, moreover, that the tenants of the cabin

had had the forethought to barricade the door ; in which case the pirates might be prevented from breaking in upon Mr. Durocher and his family until he could overpower the force immediately before him, and then, turning upon those who had gone toward the cabin, might thus be able to overcome his enemies in detail.

The door of the cabin *had* been barricaded by Mr. Durocher, as well as he could do so with the aid of his daughter and the quadroon girl ; but the fastenings scarcely withstood for one moment the violent assaults of Afton and his men.

They passed in without further opposition—the illness of Mr. Durocher preventing him from offering even a moment's resistance. An instant of silence ensued, and then, above the noise of conflict without arose the cries of distress from the cabin—the shrieks of women ! That was the cry most agonizing to young Coe.

“Here, my brave fellows !” he shouted, “follow me, and remember your own mothers and sisters at home !”

He dashed off down the deck, past the assailants and assailed still struggling there, and, followed by Ada and his men, sprung into the cabin to confront Afton and his men in their fiendish scheme. Afton, having penetrated to the state-rooms, had seized Miss Durocher and was trying to drag her forth, preparatory to removing her to the brig.

“Unhand that lady, villain,” shouted Coe.

“Villain, yourself,” roared Afton. “Who made you my master, I should like to know ?”

Afton was a strong man ; but young Coe was both stronger and more active, and when he was aroused and inflamed by a righteous anger, the pirate was but a child in his hands. He said not another word ; but, releasing the lady from the grasp of the ruffian by a sudden and dextrous exertion, he seized the pirate with both hands and swung him with tremendous force, through the state-room doorway into the saloon. So violently did the latter strike the floor, that he lay at once without sense or motion.

One of Afton's men, drawing a pistol, had pointed it at the head of the infuriated rescuer ; but ere he could pull the trigger, Ada, who already had a pistol in her hand, fired and broke his right arm, which fell powerless to his side. He

stooped to pick up the weapon which he had dropped, with the hand of his uninjured arm, but Ada drew another pistol from her belt and presented it at his head.

"If you attempt to take up that weapon again, Joe," she said, with firmness of purpose expressed in her tones, "you are a dead man."

The man yielded at once, and stood motionless and silent before the pistol which she continued to hold with the muzzle toward him.

At the same time when these scenes were occurring in the state-room, others were taking place in the saloon.

"Unhand that gentleman," said Bowsprit to two men who held the sick Mr. Durocher prisoner.

"We are acting under the orders of the second-lieutenant," replied one of the men.

"Point your pistols at those men," said Bowsprit, addressing those under his command, himself presenting a weapon in each hand at the recusants.

His orders were at once obeyed.

"We have pistols, too," gruffly said one of the men who held Mr. Durocher.

"Now," said Billy, "release your prisoner at once, or I'll warrant you'll never disobey orders again."

At this moment the body of Afton came rushing head-foremost out of the state-room.

Seeing the condition of their officer, the two men unhand Mr. Durocher, and sullenly threw their weapons upon the floor.

The fourth of the men who had accompanied Afton, and who had stood at the state-room door through all these scenes, apparently stupefied by surprise, quietly handed his pistols and cutlans to Bowsprit.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FATE OF THE FALCON.

"Sir, I thank you—

My heart is full of thanks to you."—THE DREAM.

John. Surrender, sirs.

Isaac. Never; we die first.—OLD PLAY.

"Full many a fathom deep they rushed
Down—down the dark abyss."—BALLAD.

M^R. DUROCHER, with the vivacity and warm-heartedness of a Frenchman, embraced young Coe, calling him his preserver and overwhelming him with thanks.

"Thank only God, my dear sir," replied the deliverer, "I am not doing even all my duty. How many lives may be lost on deck while I am delaying here! Mr. Bowsprit," he continued, addressing that individual, "bind the hands of your prisoners at once, and then come, with your men, upon deck with me."

Through the open door of the state-room he could see Ada, still pointing her pistol at Joe, whose right arm hung loosely at his side.

"Madam," asked John, "is that man's arm broken?"

"Yes," she answered; "I broke it with a pistol-shot; but I understand a little of surgery, and can easily set it if I can get a few splinters of wood."

Mr. Durocher had hastened to his daughter and was holding her in his embrace, when hearing the word madam addressed to a person in male attire, he said,

"From this gentleman's calling you madam, I suppose that you are a woman, and understand those sudden sicknesses caused by excited feelings, and peculiar to women?"

"I am a woman," answered Ada, blushing; "and I understand you. I see that your daughter has fainted. I will attend to her. Have you any salts?" she continued, addressing Celeste.

The poor quadroon girl was herself near to the point of swooning; but aroused herself when thus addressed, and

hastened to bring the restoratives asked for. While she was searching for these among the vials and bottles of the medicine-case, Mr. Durocher laid his daughter upon the bed. He then turned to Ada, and said,

"You need not trouble yourself with that man any more. Let him come into my state-room adjoining this, and lie upon my bed. I understand something of surgery myself; I also have the materials for making splinters, and will dress his wound."

Meanwhile, in the saloon, the hands of the prisoners were bound, even those of Afton. Leaving one of his men to guard the prisoners, Coe and the rest hastened upon deck. Scarcely five minutes had elapsed since he had left the deck—so many incidents may occur in a brief period of time, when the struggle is one of life and death.

The man who had been placed at the helm by Captain Johnson still kept his post. Through all the excitement and confusion, through the uproar and perils of the storm and the battle, that sturdy and brave seaman had, with unflinching patience and fidelity, and by a skillful management of the helm, watched for and warded off the effect of every huge wave which had threatened the safety of this ship. When the two vessels had come together, he had by good guidance, broken to a great extent the force of the collision. When he had seen his comrades pressed by vastly superior numbers, and knew that his own safety depended on their successful defense, when he had seen the pirates hurry into the cabin where were only the sickly old man and the two helpless females, he had firmly maintained his post, steadily and faithfully performing the duties which had been assigned to him. He knew that upon him depended the safety of all on board, that the slightest neglect on his part, the slightest failure of hand or eye, might allow the ship to broach to and be swamped in the tremendous seas which were now running.

Fidelity to duty in instances of this kind exhibits the purest type of heroism of character. And such instances are very common in ordinary life, among all classes and especially among the humblest. There is seldom any genuine heroism in mere fighting; when man's passions are stirred—whether by feelings right or wrong—and his animal nature thoroughly

aroused, fighting is an absolute enjoyment to him ; and in battle there is the additional incentive of glory to urge him to acts of valor. But, too often, in the merely apparent stillness of quiet life, there are duties which are discharged amid ceaseless temptations to neglect them. These nobody notes as worthy of especial honor ; because they occur every day, every hour. Many persons cross the Atlantic to see Niagara, and they talk of its grandeur and sublimity—and justly do they do so ; yet who speaks of, or even notes the fact, which all must acknowledge, that the sky, which by day and by night bends over the head of every man, woman and child in every part of the world, is a thousand times grander and more sublime than even the wonderful cataract ? A blessed truth it is to the humble disciples of humble duty, that, though no earthly being observes them with praise, God sees them.

There was yet a faint glimmer of daylight when John Coe came upon the deck of the ship. In that dim light the fight was still going on. It had commenced with twelve men from the *Falcon* on the one side, and ten men belonging to the *Duchess* on the other. So nearly were the individuals of the contending parties balanced in personal strength and prowess, that the success of the pirates had been very nearly in exact proportion to their superiority of number. The loss was of two men upon each side, and the defenders of the ship had been driven back to a position very near to the quarter-deck ; but of the pirates one was wounded and one was killed, while of the defenders two only were wounded. Both of the parties were fighting with cutlasses only ; the pistols had all been fired in the beginning of the engagement, and there had since been no opportunity of reloading them.

Coe, with his small force, threw himself between the contending ranks, flashing his cutlass right and left, and striking upward the clashing weapons.

“ Hold your hands,” he cried in a loud voice. “ My party is a small one ; but we are enough to settle this contest at once in favor of the side into whose support we may throw ourselves.”

The pirates at once dropped their points and fell back ; they, of course, felt convinced that a reinforcement had come to their help. Captain Johnsen and his men, however, naturally

looking upon the new-comers as enemies, and supposing that Coe's mode of dealing with existing affairs was a *ruse* to take them at disadvantage, were not disposed to cease fighting so readily. Still, Captain Johnson reflected that it would be well to hear *what* proposition was to be made. He, therefore, dropped his point and retired a step or two, and ordered his men to cease fighting and to fall back. His command was immediately obeyed.

"Mr. Brown," said Coe, addressing Bowsprit, as soon as he saw that the fighting was suspended, "you and your men are supplied with two pistols apiece, I believe?"

"Yes, sir," answered Billy.

"Are they all loaded?" asked Coe.

"All loaded," was the echoed answer.

"Then draw, each of you, one in each hand," said our hero, "and have each pistol ready for instant use. But keep your cutlasses suspended by the cord from the right wrist."

Coe's order was instantly obeyed; and he himself at the moment prepared his weapons as he had commanded the others to prepare theirs.

"Gentlemen pirates," he said, sarcastically, addressing those of the boarding party who had been engaged in the fight, "you will remember that, when I accepted the high and distinguished office of Captain of Marines on board of the brig *Falcon*, the free rover, I did so provisionally, and on the express condition that I retained the right of resigning *whenever I should think proper* to do so. I exercise that reserved right now. I resign the honorable post so flatteringly offered to me; and I am, therefore, no longer a member of the gallant band composing the crew of the brig *Falcon*."

"What's the meaning of all this fine talk?" asked a gruff-looking pirate. "What have we got to do with *your* affairs at this time?"

"It means that I never have been, and never have intended to be, a pirate," answered the "captain;" "I had rather die a thousand deaths than to be one of your kind. I was taken prisoner by deceit, and was then entirely in your power; yet, even in such circumstances, my first impulse was to defy your whole band and thus to bring on my own death rather than to seem to become a member of your ship's company."

I was induced to act as I have done, partly by the advice of a friend whom circumstances had forced to remain among you, but mainly by the conviction that the Ruler of events would not have allowed me to be taken prisoner by you merely for the purpose of permitting my death. I hoped not only that I might thus be able to make my escape, but that I might prevent some of the evil which you are accustomed to do in your vocation, and might also find amongst your number some whom I could induce to become again honest men. I see a good prospect of success in all these objects."

"What's the use of all this argufying?" said the sailor who had before spoken, and who was boatswain of the *Falcon*. "Tell us what do you mean? What are you going to do?"

"What I mean is this," answered Coe: "Lay down your arms at once and surrender. You have no chance of defending yourselves successfully against such odds as will now be opposed to you."

"You don't mean to say," said the boatswain, "that Lieutenant Bowsprit and them others there have turned ag'in us?"

"We are all," answered Bowsprit, "pledged to stand by Mr. Coe for life or death."

"As to them other fellows there," said the boatswain, "I never had much faith in *them*; but I didn't think, lieutenant, that *you* would ever desert us."

"I am determined," replied Bowsprit, "to live hereafter, and to die, an honest man."

"And to get yourself hanged," sneered the sailor.

"I had rather things should come to that," said Bowsprit, "than ever to be a pirate again."

"Come," said Coe; "you must decide quickly. Do you surrender?"

"Never," answered the boatswain. "We can hold out until old bully Aston comes from the cabin, confound him, he's always after the gals and the rhino; we shall then be equal to you. Never say 'die'—heh, boys?"

The pirates answered him by cheers, mingled with oaths, swearing that they would rather die where they stood like men, than to be hanged like dogs.

"You need not expect help from Aston or his men," said

the resolute Coe, addressing the pirates; "I have them all bound in the cabin."

"Mr. Coe," said Bowsprit, who did not like to take a part in consigning any of his old comrades to the gallows, "suppose we allow them to escape to the *Falcon*?"

That question was never answered.

The reference made by Billy Bowsprit to the brig caused most of the pirates, and the boatswain among the number, to turn their faces toward that vessel. What they saw determined them to immediate action. Most men come to a resolution very speedily when a sudden emergency leaves them but a brief time for doing so.

When the two cannons were fired by Captain Johnson and one of his mates at the very moment when the pirates boarded the *Duchess*, the effect of the rebound of the guns upon one vessel and of the striking of the shot upon the other had a violent tendency to drive the ship and the brig apart. The hold of the grappling-irons and other fastenings which kept the two vessels together was, therefore, much weakened by the shock. The violent dashing against each other of the ship and the brig had not only carried away a considerable part of the upperworks, but threatened, if continued much longer, to dash in the very sides of the two vessels; of course, this ceaseless motion tended to weaken more and more the bonds which held the ship and the brig together.

At the very moment when the boatswain and others of the pirates looked toward the brig, these fastenings gave way, and the two vessels were about to part.

"Come, boys! quick!" cried the boatswain, rushing toward the guards of the ship. He was immediately followed by all of his men who were left alive, except the one who lay wounded upon the ship's deck. The next instant they sprang from the broken guards of the *Duchess* toward the deck of the *Falcon*; in the confusion and hurry three of them missed the leap, fell into the sea and were drowned. At the same time the vessels parted.

When the boatswain gained the brig, he turned toward those whom he left on the deck of the ship, shook his fist, and exclaimed, in a voice that was heard above the sound of the wind and the sea:

“Look out for the ‘Long Tom!’”

“We should not have allowed them to escape,” said John Coe to Captain Johnson.

“It is better as it is,” said the captain. “We have escaped from a fate so terrible, that all minor perils are but as trifles in comparison. I know not who you are, young gentleman but your appearance and action among us have been so wonderful that it almost seems as if you were an angel sent from heaven to rescue us.”

“You do me too much honor,” said the young man. “But I will explain to you every thing when we have leisure. At present there are the wounded to be attended to.”

“True,” replied the captain. Then turning to his men, he added, “Bring lights, some of you, and remove the wounded below.”

By this time the vessels were some twenty yards apart.

“See!” exclaimed Billy Bowsprit, “they are loading the cannon on board the *Falcon*.”

Only dimly through the night shadows could the deck of the brig be seen; for now the last vestige of daylight had departed.

Some of the men who belonged to the *Duchess* were enabled to assist in loading the two cannons; for Captain Johnson had expressed his determination that, if a shot were fired from the pirate brig, he would, as before, return them two for one.

“The two shots which I fired at the moment of their boarding us,” he said to Coe, “made a good-sized hole in their hull just above the water mark; and they must have taken in considerable water through it, during the tossing and pitching of the brig. I will make another hole in their timbers if they fire at me again.”

Even while he spoke a shot came from the *Falcon*. It was fired probably by the skilful hand of Seacome; for it again carried away a part of the guards. Fortunately, no one was injured.

Captain Johnson quickly responded with his two guns. His object was to strike the enemy's hull, near where his last two shots had struck; and he probably did so, for, in a few moments afterwards—by the light of the lamps on board of the *Falcon*—men were seen hurrying to and fro it apparently

great excitement. Loud tones were also heard, seemingly giving orders.

All who were on the deck of the *Duchess* stood still, listening and watching.

"Your shot must have done them serious damage," said Coe at length, to Captain Johnson; "the excitement seems to increase."

"It seems to me," said Billy Bowsprit, who was watching things sharply, "the *Falcon* is settling in the water."

Upon the background of the sky, the spectators on board of the *Duchess* could see the masts of the brig slowly bend forward; still slowly for a while, they moved onward in the same direction, sinking, sinking from the horizontal line in the sky which they had formerly touched; and then their motion was gradually accelerated.

"See!" exclaimed Bowsprit; "her bows are going under, as sure as my name is William."

That instant, a wild, despairing and mingled cry arose from the deck of the *Falcon*; the next moment that gallant craft plunged head-foremost into the sea and disappeared.

"God have mercy on their souls!" exclaimed Captain Johnson. "The best among them can be but little prepared to enter the other world."

The captain of the *Duchess* then ordered a thorough examination to be made of the damage done to his ship. For many feet along the larboard beam and larboard bow the guards were almost entirely torn away. From the fact that the ship was also leaking, it was evident that the planks had been started somewhat where the larboard side of the *Duchess* had been beaten against by the starboard of the *Falcon*; a single pump kept regularly at work easily balanced the effects of this leak. A part of this labor was performed by some of Billy Bowsprit's men, all of whom—at the suggestion of Coe—reported themselves to Captain Johnson for duty as a part of his crew.

Aston and the three of his men who were unwounded were put in irons and removed to safe keeping in the forward part of the ship; and the man whose arm had been broken by Ada Marston's shot was placed with the rest of the wounded in the sailor's quarters, where they were all made as

comfortable as circumstances would allow. After these tasks had been attended to, Captain Johnson read the "funeral service at sea" over the bodies of the dead, which, enshrouded and with weights attached to them, were launched into the ocean. The decks were then scrubbed by the light of lanterns, the watch set for the night, and all made secure.

These duties being performed, Captain Johnson, Coe and Billy Bowsprit went down into the cabin, to look after the condition of things there. They found Louise recovered from her swoon, but still very pale and nervous. She sat beside the sofa, on which lay her father, very ill from the shock of his recent terrible excitement. The quadroon girl was crouched upon the floor at the feet of her mistress; she also was very pale, and her eyes still had a wild and alarmed look. Ada, too, sat upon the floor, at a little distance from the others, her head against the seat of a chair, and her face hidden in her hands. She had been upon deck and had seen the brig sink in the ocean. She had learned of her husband's death; that she was weeping proved that she was woman.

There was not much rest for Captain Johnson that night; the leaky condition of his ship, and the still strong gale and high-rolling waves kept him on the alert. Billy Bowsprit, who was a thorough seaman, insisted upon watching with the captain. Coe was assigned a berth in one of the state-rooms forward of the saloon. Knowing that he could be of no further use, he consented to retire for the night. Being much fatigued, he soon fell asleep, in dreams to recall, in forms more or less distorted, all the incidents of the day; yet, amid all the scenes which his memory presented to his imagination, bent over him the soft, appealing eyes, the pale and beautiful face of Louise Durocher.

CHAPTER XIII

GATHERED ENDS.

"Melting and mingling into one

Two kindred souls."—ANON.

"And so his life was gently exhaled in peace."—ANON.

"Hail, wedded love!"—PARADISE LOST.

"That's the very moral on't."—NYM.

THE gale continued blowing all that night, all the next day and for two or three days following. The injured condition of the ship made it unsafe for her to contend against the force of so strong a wind; and she was, therefore, kept directly before it. While the *Duchess* was thus running before the wind, two of the wounded pirates and three of the wounded of the ship's crew died, and were committed to the deep. The man whose arm had been broken by Ada's pistol-shot, and the other two of the wounded men belonging to the ship's company recovered before the arrival of the vessel in port.

A consultation was held in Mr. Durocher's state-room, on the day after the fight, between Mr. Durocher himself, Captain Johnson and John Coe, to which Billy Bowsprit was also admitted, and in which it was determined that, as soon as the gale should abate, the ship should be steered for the nearest port in the United States. This determination was formed that the ship might receive the necessary repairs, and that the captured pirates might be surrendered to the government whose citizens they were.

On the fourth day after the fight the wind from the west had so abated that the course of the ship was changed, and she was headed toward the west. On the fifth day a fresh wind from the north arose; and, impelled by it, the *Duchess* made good progress toward the American coast.

Meanwhile the gallant young Marylander had become intimately acquainted with Mr. Durocher and his daughter. He told to them the singular history of his connection with the pirates, of which Ada had already given them some particu-

a The warm-hearted old French gentleman became much

attached to the brave fellow, upon whom he could not look, he said, without remembering the awful horror from which the young American had delivered his daughter and himself. Besides, he esteemed him as an impersonation of courage and genius, because—in circumstances in which, according to ordinary apprehension, it seemed impossible to avoid being forced to the commission of crime—he had not only overcome his enemies, saving the penitent and destroying the hopelessly guilty, but had, also, escaped from all the difficulties which had surrounded him, with his own hands unstained by human blood.

The fair and gentle Louise, too, was not insensible to the merits of her deliverer; her fervid feelings recognized in him a personification of the knights of old; and, with the spirit of self-sacrifice which greatly influences the tender and amiable of her sex, she longed to devote the services of her life to him in requital for her salvation from a horrible doom.

It must be confessed that “the deliverer” was not unimpressible nor unimpressed. Fixed forever in his memory was the image of that young and loving girl, as he first beheld her when she lay pale, senseless and perfectly helpless in the power of the pirate. And when he saw her afterwards, fully awakened to life, and her intelligent and enthusiastic mind and kind and loving heart expressing themselves in every glance of her soft-blue eyes, in every flush that tinged her fair cheeks, in every expression of her beautiful lips, and in every musical sentence that issued from between them, he could scarcely realize that the bright form, clad in white robes, expressive of purity, and the shining face, surrounded by a halo of golden hair, belonged not to an angelic presence.

Indeed, these two young hearts required but an uttered word to cause the fountain of mutual love—like the waters of Horeb brought forth by the touch of the prophet’s wand—to pour out for each other its treasures of tenderness. And that word was at length spoken, with the entire approbation of Mr. Durocher, whose friendship and fatherly regard for the young American was almost as great as his daughter’s love.

The merchant’s health, already weak, had received a terrible shock from the agony which his heart experienced on the evening of the assault of the pirates—a shock from the effects

of which he never recovered, and when the *Duchess* entered Charleston Harbor, three weeks after that dreadful evening, he had to be carried on a bed from the boat to the rooms engaged for his party at the hotel. To this house Ada Marston and John Coe accompanied him.

Immediately on arriving at Charleston, John wrote to his parents, informing them of all the remarkable adventures which had befallen him, and mentioning the state of affairs between Louise and himself. In due course of mail he received letters from his father and mother stating the great happiness of all the family at hearing of his safety, and expressing the full and joyous consent of Mr. and Mrs. Coe to the engagement of their son with Miss Durocher.

These letters gave great satisfaction to Mr. Durocher. He learned from them that his child was about to enter a family by whom she would be received and cherished as indeed a daughter and sister. As his health was rapidly failing, and he felt that death was near at hand, he expressed an earnest desire that the marriage ceremony between John and Louise should not be postponed; he wished before his departure, to see his daughter in the lawful care of a protector in whose honorable character and sincere love for her he himself had perfect faith. His will was law under the circumstances; and, on the second day after the receipt of the letters from Millmont, John Alvan Coe and Louise Durocher were united for life, at the bedside of the bride's dying father, by a minister of the church to which all of the parties belonged.

Mr. Durocher survived his daughter's marriage but two weeks. His sick-bed was waited on by two attentive and affectionate children, and his last days were soothed by the knowledge that he had done all that could be done to secure for his beloved child a happy life.

A few days after the death of Mr. Durocher, John Coe and his wife left Charleston by stage, and arrived in due course of time at the young husband's old home at Millmont—but a little more than two months after he had disappeared from the latter place in a manner apparently so mysterious.

In less than a year John realized the amount of his wife's fortune, with a part of which a large estate was purchased in **one of the upper counties of Maryland.** Upon this estate a

handsome building was erected, to which he removed his family in the second year of his marriage. His descendants, distinguished, like their ancestors, for intellect and energy, still occupy that mansion. Some of them have filled high offices under the State and Federal Government.

A few words must be allowed with regard to our other characters :

Aston and the four pirates taken prisoners with him, were tried, a few months after their capture, before one of the United States Courts, in Baltimore, to which port their vessel had belonged. They were all found guilty, and sentenced to be hanged. Two of them died in prison before the day appointed for their execution, the other three—of whom the rebellious Aston was one—suffered the extreme penalty of the law.

John Coe kept his promise to Billy Bowsprit and the five repentant pirates. His father's influence, and that of all his father's friends, was used to obtain their pardon ; and, when it was made clearly apparent to the President that but for their help the result of the fight between the *Duchess* and the *Falcon* would have been entirely different, that pardon was readily granted.

Perhaps the reader has some desire to know what was the future fortune of Ada.

She accompanied Coe and his wife from Charleston to Maryland. Here a fresh grief awaited her. Her father, in alarm at hearing of the safety and early return of young Coe, and in dread of the consequences of the exposure which must ensue, had hastily and rashly taken his own life.

By the death of her father without a will, she became heir to one-half of his wealth—there being but one other child of Mr. Ashleigh, a grown son, to divide his property with her. She thus became "an heiress ;" and several young gentlemen in the neighborhood of Drum Point and elsewhere were quite willing, on account of her riches and her great beauty, to forget that she was the daughter of a receiver of smuggled goods and the widow of a pirate, and made her a tender of their hands. Ada, however, politely declined all these disinterested offers. About a year and a half after the death of her first husband, she was married to Billy Bowsprit. Billy had been the only person on board of the brig who had

invariably treated her with kindness and respect ; he had been her champion on all occasions, and she knew that he was devoted to her. Moreover, he could not upbraid her for having been the wife of a pirate.

Mr. and Mrs. Brown (to give them their right title) wished to be away from the neighborhood of those who were acquainted with their antecedents. The lady's portion of her father's estate was, therefore, soon after her marriage, converted into funds, with which a large plantation was purchased in Mississippi. To this they removed ; and I have been told that they prospered, and that their descendants still flourish in that State.

L'ENVOY TO THE READER.

The indulgent reader will allow the author to call his attention to a few remarks by way of epilogue.

It is intended to illustrate, in the history of John Alvan Coe, the truth that, however—as must sometimes happen in every human life—we may be placed in circumstances which seem to render it impossible to avoid the commission of crime unless at the expense of earthly existence, a full trust in God, and a determination to die, if necessary, rather than to do a sinful act in the consciousness of its being such, will not only claim, but will assuredly bring to us the Divine aid, either through ourselves, or through external circumstances, or (as in the present instance) through both these means, to preserve us.

If this little work shall impress even a few of its readers—so as to guide their action—with the truth, that it is our duty to resist wrong, even when it may seem to be irresistible, the author will be glad indeed that he has devoted time and labor to writing the story of John Alvan Coe and the fate of “*The Falcon Rover*.”

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